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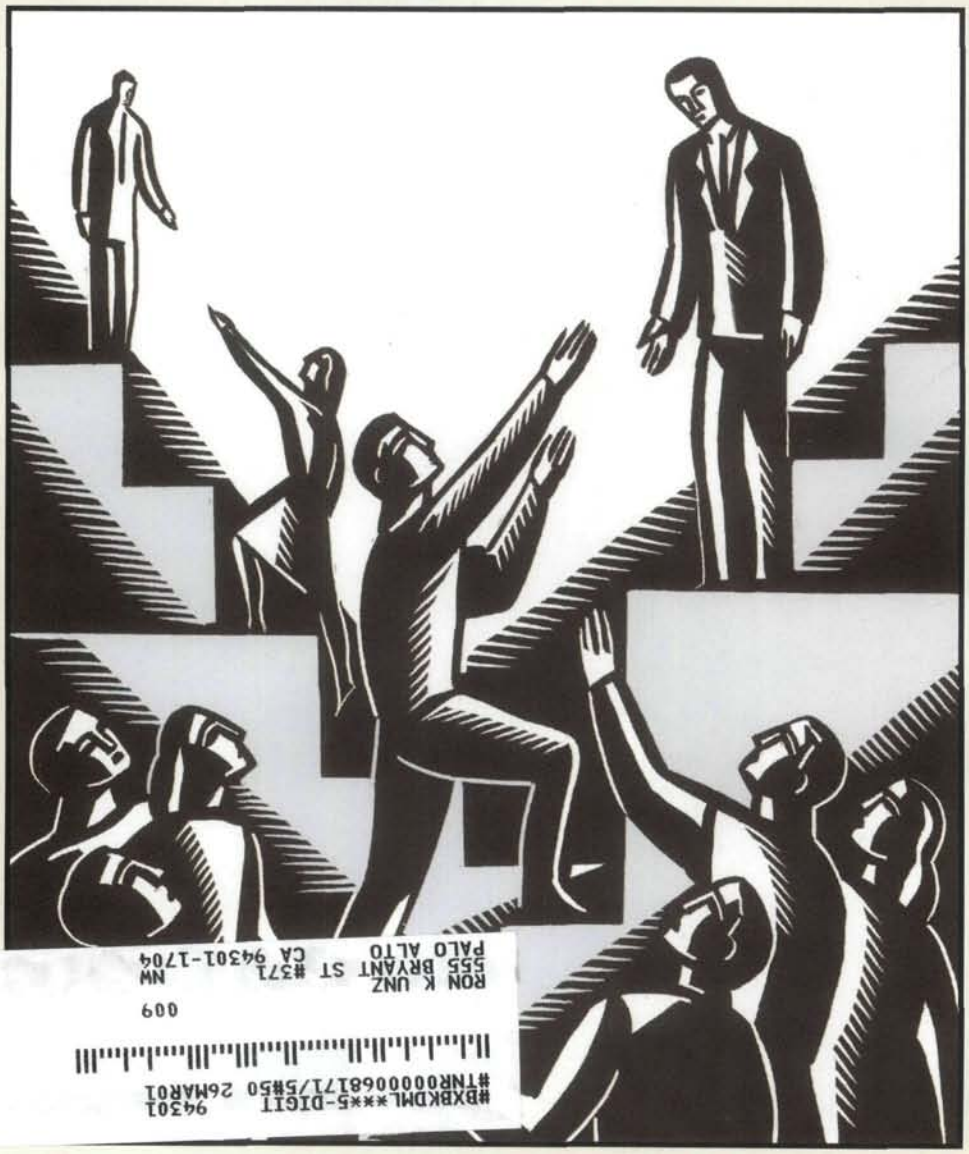

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Reports From The Hard Core

Dana Milbank • Hanna Rosin

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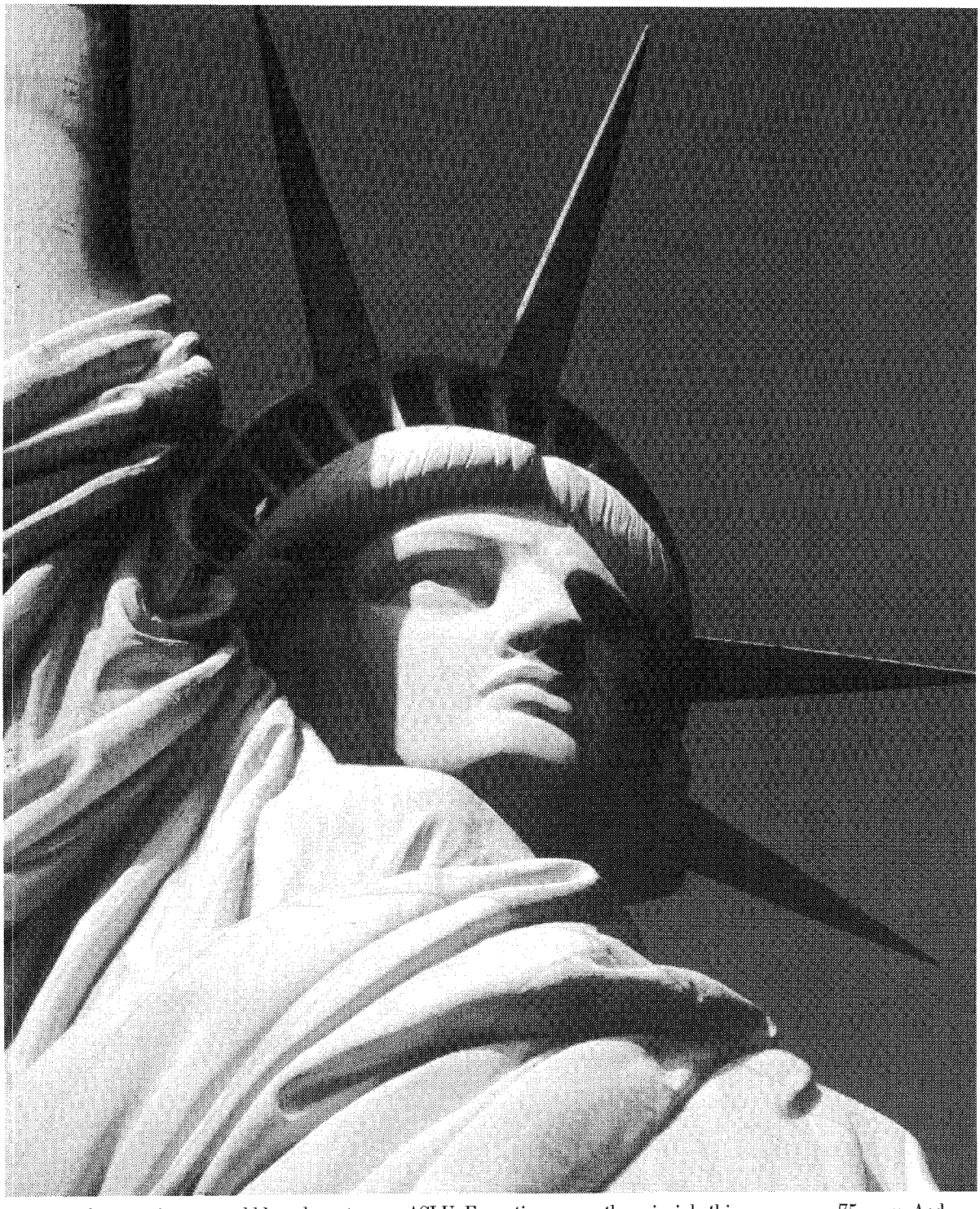

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

AUGUST 4, 1997

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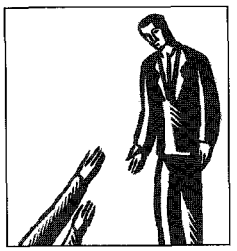

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CORRESPONDENCE

Speech impediments

To the editors:

While Jonathan Rauch ("Offices and Gentlemen," June 23) clipped every silly anecdote of litigiousness done in the name of harassment, he ignored the most powerful threat to workplace speech: the boss. Because getting fired for speaking your mind isn't protected speech, a large body of litigation doesn't exist on the subject. But most employees know that objecting to the sexism of a boss is still far more dangerous to your job than telling a sexist joke.

JOHN K. WILSON
Chicago, Illinois

Proving grounds

To the editors:

In her article "Sleeping With the Enemy" (June 23), Hanna Rosin labors mightily to frame the United States Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground case as an example of political correctness run amok. She professes astonishment at the military's definition of rape, a definition that Rosin thinks was "cribbed from radical feminist theory."

There is nothing, however, radical about the Army's definition of rape. Rape convictions based on threats, without actual force, have been routine in every American jurisdiction for 100 years. Most U.S. courts abolished the requirement of corroborating physical evidence more than twenty years ago. The concept of "constructive force" that Rosin portrays as a radical feminist outlier is standard law in virtually all American states. No jurisdiction in America requires resistance when the victim reasonably believes that resistance would be futile.

STEPHEN J. SCHULHOFER
Chicago, Illinois

Irish eyes

To the editors:

David J. Lynch ("Bombed by Reality," June 23) is certainly welcome in placing the Irish Republican Army properly in its local context. But he worries that his hostility to IRA terrorism undermines his conviction that "Ireland ought to belong to the Irish, not the British." I urge him to stop feeling guilty, let democracy salve his conscience. Ireland, both parts, (temporarily) British Ulster and the Republic, belong to the Irish. Only rigid Irish nationalism with contempt for democracy would rule out that some Irish can be British. (Remember that British is not English and the Scots are not English; even Texans and New Yorkers can be American.) Like extreme "race" nationalism everywhere, the Irish version would deny that the Irish can even be "real" Americans.

There are at least 1 million Irish-born Catholics living in mainland Britain. The IRA has worked for decades to make those people pariahs in the eyes of the native English. The IRA has succeeded with too much of the police force but with few in the general population.

ROBERT ST-CYR
Greenlawn, New York

Left out

To the editors:

As a European Socialist, I had to endure a strange mix of bewilderment and irritation when reading "C'est Fini" (June 23) on the victory of Lionel Jospin's left-wing coalition in France. One doesn't need a Ph.D. in political science to know the European left is not made of terrorists or drugged-up anarchists running around naked. Walter Veltroni, the Italian deputy prime minister and a leader of the Italian reformed Communist Party, recently praised the ideas and style of Prime Minister Tony Blair—not quite Chairman Mao. The French Communist Party that you fear so much has signed a platform that made the French stock market rest in serenity; I would hate it if traders had better political judgment than my favorite American pundits. Prejudice and ignorance are not a platform; they're merely a bad attitude.

MARC JANSSEN
Brussels, Belgium

To the editors:

In "C'est Fini," the editors write that "Since unification in 1989, the German Bundesbank has maintained high interest rates...." That event occurred on October 3, 1990. High rates compared to whom and to what? A ten-year Bund goes for around 5.7 percent—that is about 100 basis points less than the equivalent Treasury bill, and one of the lowest rates in memory.

You also opine that "the French ... must now maintain high interest rates" to cope with the "tight monetary policy" of the Bundesbank. Look again: a ten-year French OAT fetches 5.7 percent, which is a historic low for France and about 100 points less than the ten-year rate in the United States.

JOSEF JOFFE
Munich, Germany

Original sin

To the editors:

George P. Fletcher ("Unsound Constitution," June 23) suggests that Timothy McVeigh followed the advice of Alexander Hamilton: "[I]f the persons intrusted with supreme power become usurpers.... The citizens must rush tumultuously to arms, without concert, without system, without resource...." These words from Federalist No. 28 are not advice, they are a description of the predicament of citizens in a single state of limited extent, who cannot effectively defend themselves against a tyrannical government. Hamilton contrasts this with the prospective situation of the United States, where state governments will be alert to a usurpation by federal officials and can lead a popular resistance with enough resource to have a chance of success. Hamilton describes a resistance by the American people as a whole, not by a state or section, and most certainly not by one or a few individuals. Perhaps constitutional provisions for elections and amendment make the right of revolution obsolete (Hamilton would say "almost"); but that would confirm what Fletcher rashly denies: the continuing authority and importance of the original Constitution.

DAVID F. EPSTEIN
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Vital stats

To the editors:

In "Unsolved Mysteries" (June 23), Nathan Glazer ought not wonder about the causes of the decline in crime. The crime numbers that the FBI likes to tally are population sensitive—that is, muggings and other nasty stuff—and are mostly the work of young thugs between the ages of 13 and 22. Demographically, the number of people in that age group has recently shown a sharp decline.

ORRIN RILEY
New York, New York

Double D.A.R.E.

To the editors:

It was disappointing to see THE NEW REPUBLIC, which has had a history of responsible journalism, sink to the level of a tabloid in printing such an outlandish, slanted article on DARE ("Don't You D.A.R.E.," March 3). Stephen Glass used the journalistic ploy of creating an artificial, impossible to fulfill, "deadline" of one hour in giving me an opportunity to be interviewed for an article that obviously took days, if not

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weeks, to prepare. Instead, the article stated that I did not respond and used tabloid strategies of attacking the DARE program using unnamed sources making false allegations about DARE conspiracies, intimidation, electronic jamming of television transmissions, media manipulation and other outrageous false assertions that do not merit a response.

The foundation of the article falsely asserted that on January 28, 1991, in Douglasville, Georgia, the DARE program was responsible for a fourth-grade student calling 911 to report that his parents were in possession of methamphetamines; that the student was inspired by his DARE officer and that the DARE program encouraged children to inform on their parents. The fact is Douglasville, Georgia, did not have a DARE program or a DARE officer in January of 1991. Douglasville did not implement DARE until a full year after this incident was alleged to have occurred. The only verifiable allegation in the article was false, further indicating your reporter's bias and lack of fact-checking at the source.

More importantly, the inference that DARE is a program that teaches children to turn in their parents to the police is false. DARE is a drug and violence prevention education program. DARE's purpose is to teach children about the dangers of drugs, and provide them with the skills necessary to resist drug use and avoid violence. Over 100 million young people have completed the DARE curriculum.

DARE is a tremendous force for good. It is an educational prevention program that is implemented on a community basis as a result of a local decision-making process. Before the DARE curriculum was available, there was virtually no anti-drug, anti-violence or anti-gang curriculum in our nation's schools. DARE America, a nonprofit charitable organization, now provides a curriculum that has been adopted by approximately 75 percent of our nation's school districts.

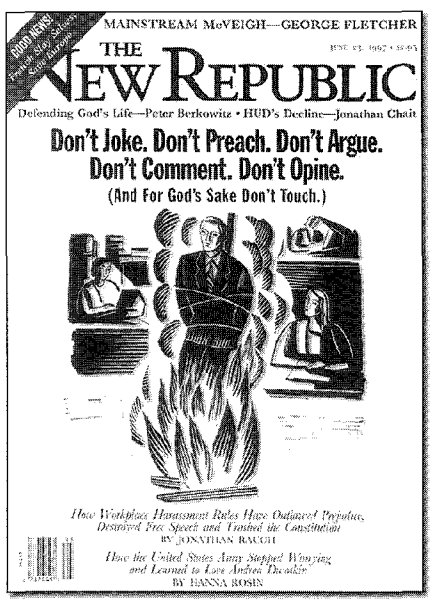
DARE gives children a tremendous assortment of research-based prevention tools that will help them to resist drugs and violence. However, like all prevention education programs, it was never intended to be the sole solution or a magic bullet that will make the drug problem disappear forever. It provides an important and continuously improved education-based foundation upon which parents, religious institutions, positive role models, the media and other social institutions can build upon to reinforce anti-drug, anti-violence and anti-gang efforts to assist children.

The volunteers and staff involved with DARE have been committed to helping children and young people avoid the scourges of drug abuse and violence. The goal of DARE is to help teach children to avoid drugs. The reason for this is obvious: it is because drug abuse is a serious public health epidemic that destroys lives.

GLENN LEVANT
President
Founding Director
D.A.R.E. America, Worldwide
Los Angeles, California

Stephen Glass replies:

Glenn Levant's claim that I gave him a one-hour deadline to be interviewed is simply not true. In fact, Levant had a full month to respond to my questions


MAINSTREAM McVEIGH—GEORGE FLETCHER
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Defending God's Life—Peter Berkowitz • HUD's Decline—Jonathan Chait
Don't Joke. Don't Preach. Don't Argue.
Don't Comment. Don't Opine.
(And For God's Sake Don't Touch.)
How Workplace Harassment Rules Have Outlawed Prejudice, Destroyed Free Speech and Trashed the Constitution
BY JONATHAN RAUCH
How the United States Army Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love Andrea Dworkin
BY HANNA ROSIN

about the program during which I called and sent faxes repeatedly. Every time that I sent DARE America a fax, I called its headquarters to confirm receipt. I first contacted DARE America on January 7. I spoke to Ralph Lochridge, the organization's spokesman, on January 14 and requested an interview at that time. Several days later, I spoke to Lochridge again, and again requested an interview with Levant. At that time, I also left a message for Levant with DARE America's receptionist. Having heard nothing in reply, I faxed Levant a letter on Monday, February 3, again requesting an interview. Still hearing nothing, I faxed another letter to Levant on February 9. In that letter, I wrote that I had even received from my editors a special extension until February 10 so that he could respond. On the afternoon of February 10, Lochridge finally called me and said that Levant *might* respond to my questions if they were in writing. An hour later, I faxed Levant four typed pages of questions. He did not reply in any fashion.

Moreover, Levant's objection with regard to the Douglasville DARE program is misleading. The point of the incident I recounted, and indeed the point of my entire article, was to demonstrate the ability of DARE to bully the press to serve its ends—in this case by convincing *The Washington Post* to alter an op-ed article to incorrectly accuse the parents of the boy of drug trafficking. Levant ignores this serious allegation to focus instead on what is largely an irrelevancy. Levant is correct in saying that DARE did not formally start in Douglasville until a year after the incident I described. However, it is common in communities that are about to launch DARE to have officers show videotapes or give anti-drug lessons to the students. J.W. Bouldin, the lawyer for the parents of the boy, told me that his actions against his parents were indeed inspired by DARE. And Roberta Silverman, then DARE's spokeswoman, told *The Washington Post* that the student had, in fact, been in a DARE program. After receiving Levant's letter to the editors, I called school and police officials who told me that, although DARE was not formally installed at the time in question, police officers did, on an informal basis in the prior years, visit classrooms to deliver anti-crime and anti-drug messages.

Finally, it is bizarre to say that this claim was "the only verifiable allegation" in the article. The eight-page story looked at DARE's record in several communities, reported on negative assessments of DARE in numerous studies and contained on-the-record allegations of DARE's intimidation tactics from a wide array of individuals. The only way these allegations can be considered unverifiable is if Levant chooses not to verify them.

Seizing the initiative

To the editors:

According to John J. Miller's "No Initiative" (July 14 & 21), I hold the view that statewide initiatives like California's Proposition 209 will not succeed "unless the Republican Party at the state and national levels gets in line with the grassroots and decides to lead them."

What I actually said in my phone interview with Miller is that efforts similar to 209 at the federal level and in other states had not been as successful to date as I had either hoped or anticipated, and that one factor was undoubtedly the failure of the leadership of the Republican Party at the congressional level and in those states to press the issue.

continued on page 41

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TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

What news?

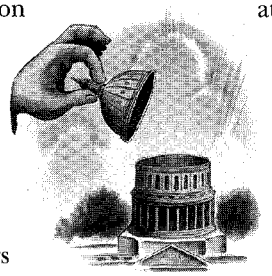
In the mid-afternoon of July 9, halfway through the second day of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee hearings into campaign finance illegalities, a reporter from ABC News called me to ask if I might be interested in bringing my head over to talk on "Nightline" that night. The proposed topic: what a big bust these boring hearings were. The topic, the reporter said, had originally been scheduled for the very first day of the hearings. "But, you know how it goes," he said, "we got blown out by Tyson."

As senior White House officials frequently bemoan, these are not idealistic times—but still, the performance of the national media in the first days of the Thompson hearings was breathtaking for the depth of its cynicism and the breadth of its irresponsibility.

Consider: it has been publicly and credibly alleged that the White House, during the 1996 election cycle, ran an aggressive operation to subvert federal election laws; that this operation invited all sorts of shady characters and special interests to believe that their lightly rinsed donations would buy access to the president and other high officials and the chance to influence U.S. policy; that this operation may have helped to render the American political system vulnerable to the machinations of a secret campaign by the People's Republic of China to influence U.S. policy. The Senate hearings proposed to investigate these charges.

It was to be expected that the White House would adopt a strategy intended not to out the truth but to contain the damage. And it was to be expected that the congressional minority would for the most part join in this effort, in support of their own interests and those of their president. And it was to be expected that much of the hearings would be tedious, and would plow over ground already covered in press reports. And it was to be expected that the congressional majority would not comport itself as an entirely disinterested seeker of truth. In such matters, these are generally the conditions that obtain; they certainly obtained in the Watergate hearings and in the Iran-contra hearings.

The expected occurred. The first day of testimony was a little dull. The majority trumpeted; the minority stonewalled. Having previously announced or leaked much of the most damaging evidence against it, the White House declared that the hearings were revealing nothing, and everyone should go home. White House counsel Lanny Davis, in a memorable display of contempt for Congress and the press, installed himself as a hallway spinner outside the hearing room. "There is no news here," Davis informed the news hounds only a few hours after the testimony had begun. As Andrew Ferguson reported in *The Weekly Standard*, Democratic National Committee flacks backed up Davis with handouts: "Nothing New in Morning Testimony—Huang Hiring Detailed Seven Months Ago.... Instead of wasting taxpayer money on hearings today, investigators could have got the same information seven months ago from a 60-cent newspaper."



What happened next? A large portion of the media adopted the White House-DNC line—the line, that is, of the parties under investigation. ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, CNN, MSNBC and C-SPAN all declined to broadcast the hearings live. During the first two weeks of hearings, the big-three networks have given them coverage on their evening newscasts, but the coverage has been as restrained as the White House could ask for, rarely leading the newscasts and generally treating the hearings as partisan theater rather than as a serious inquiry.

Glaring stories were ignored. Richard Sullivan, the former finance director for the Democratic National Committee, was the first witness and, to the Republicans, a surprisingly disappointing one. Judging by the candid tone of his earlier deposition, the Republicans had expected Sullivan to give testimony that the White House had pressured the DNC to hire soft-money wizard John Huang. But Sullivan proved highly uncooperative on the stand. Why did he change his tune? Who knows? The mainstream press didn't ask that question. Instead it played Sullivan's testimony the way Davis wanted: a straight case of no news here. "A SCANDAL FALLS VICTIM TO ITS OWN IRRELEVANCE," declared the headline in the Sunday *New York Times*, after less than a week of hearings.

In fact, unless one is prepared to adopt the Davis standard that information provided under congressional oath does not qualify as meaningful if it has been previously asserted by a reporter, there *was* significant news in the first week of hearings, and there was more in the second week. In his opening remarks, Senator Thompson declared that "high-level Chinese Government officials crafted a plan to increase China's influence over the U.S. political process." Senator Glenn, speaking for the minority, said he did not think the evidence supported this claim. This was played largely as a case of partisan he-said, he-said, but the evidence and the testimony made available to reporters in these two weeks of hearings strongly supports Thompson's point of view.

Even in the first week it was established that Huang, an operative of the Chinese-backed Lippo conglomerate, was put in the Commerce Department and later the DNC at the express urging of President Clinton, that Huang was considered both a major raiser of "soft money" at the DNC and a suspect character, that Huang received thirty-seven classified CIA briefings while at Commerce, and that he made a practice of leaving his office to make telephone calls from the Washington offices of the Little Rock firm Stephens, Inc. Evidence was introduced to show that one contribution, a $50,000 check personally handed to Hillary Clinton's chief of staff in the White House, came from a $150,000 wire transfer from the Bank of China.

Now comes the news from week two. On July 15, the Senate committee established clear proof that Huang funneled illegal foreign contributions from the Lippo Group into the Democratic Party, and that the Lippo Group was, as one expert testified, "a joint venture with the Chinese government." In another newsworthy development, the committee showed that a Hong Kong billionaire and big-time Democratic donor named Eric Hotung was granted a private audience with then-Deputy National Security Adviser Sandy Berger (now the national security adviser) after Hotung's wife gave $100,000 to the DNC; and after DNC Chairman Don Fowler wrote a refreshingly candid memo to White House political director Doug Sosnik, calling Hotung a "very strong supporter ... of the President and the DNC" and explaining that "Mr. Hotung has several policy options that he would like to suggest for consideration by administration officials." Lanny Davis assured the press that nothing was amiss. But this time the papers led with the facts, and Davis was buried in the jump.

MICHAEL KELLY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

AUGUST 4, 1997

HUN THE ATTILA

After a brief spring of tentative democracy, brightened recently by the prospect that Pol Pot might at last be brought to justice, fear has returned to Cambodia. The man who brought it back is the country's Second Prime Minister, a cackling thug named Hun Sen, formerly of the Khmer Rouge and then the puppet of Vietnam. In the days since Hun Sen's coup against his nominal coalition partner, First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh, Hun Sen has ordered the deaths of at least forty top Ranariddh loyalists and uncounted scores of lower-ranking opponents. The purge continues. Hundreds are in hiding. The Cambodian press shut itself down.

For now, Hun Sen is "second" to none. The international community might yet prevent him from consolidating power. But the only thing more appalling than Hun Sen's coup is the passive reaction to it by governments who once invested so heavily in, and postured so piously about, Cambodian democracy. Japan expressed the hope that a new First Prime Minister could be appointed. Australia's ambassador cabled his government that Hun Sen's coup is preferable to "the sterile game of propping up Ranariddh." Hun Sen, this diplomat explained, "has always wanted ... a more or less well-governed Cambodia under [his] control, but legitimized by a reasonably free and fair election in May 1998." The ambassador did not say whether the families of the Cambodians murdered so far think they are more well-governed now, or less.

For its part, the Clinton administration, caught up in the fanfare over NATO expansion, has reacted hesitantly. Washington is taking its cues from its embassy in Phnom Penh, and the recent cables of Ambassador Kenneth Quinn have emphasized the need to work with Hun Sen. The U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh disgracefully turned away a few desperate members of the Cambodian opposition who are also American citizens. *The Washington Post* reports that American diplomats told one Cambodian-American asylum-seeker that he had to renounce the Cambodian half of his dual citizenship.

Alas, Hun Sen's coup was eminently foreseeable. As one U.N. aid official in Phnom Penh told the *Post*, the present bloodbath is really just "the most drastic and most important step in a coup that started in August, '93." At that time, Hun Sen threatened to launch a civil war after he was defeated by Ranariddh at the polls. Outside sponsors of Cambodia's peace process, represented in Phnom Penh by Yasushi Akashi of the United Nations, urged Ranariddh to give in to Hun Sen's demands.

Neither prime minister was blameless in the ensuing four-year contest for power. Still, it was Hun Sen who demonstrated the greatest capacity for deceit and outright murder. Ranariddh attempted to shore up his base of support, as Hun Sen charges, by cutting deals with various Khmer Rouge factions—but he did so only after Hun Sen himself recruited the egregious Ieng Sary, Pol Pot's ex-foreign minister, to his side. Among Hun Sen's recent efforts at stabilizing things was to bomb a rally in Phnom Penh for an opposition politician, Sam Rainsy—an act of terror that cost sixteen lives. Hun Sen used terror because, with elections scheduled for next May, it was increasingly clear he would lose at the polls again.

Poor Cambodia, in short, is the most recent illustration of the principle that peace cannot be built on a foundation of appeasement. The truly "sterile game" is the one played by diplomats who place their faith in shotgun pacts among aggressors, or in the ephemeral efficiencies of authoritarian rule. (This point also applies to Bosnia, where the Dayton accords call for a multiethnic state but leave intact three fiefdoms ruled by ethnic strongmen. Fortunately, last week Western troops moved against Bosnian Serb war criminals.)

Hun Sen, too, needs to be taught a lesson, if it is not too late. The U.S. has announced a thirty-day freeze of its $5 million aid program. This is, at best, a first step. The U.S. must organize a complete cessation of all aid from all sources (nearly half of Cambodia's budget comes from foreign donors) until Hun Sen has definitively and verifiably restored civil liberties and held a free and fair election in which everyone, including Ranariddh, can participate.

And we have another proposal. The disaster in Cambodia is taking place at the very moment museumgoers are thrilling to "Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia: Millennium of Glory" at the National Gallery in Washington. The political immolations of Cambodia have already resulted in the vandalism and destruction of a shockingly large portion of the Khmer artistic heritage. It would be the height of irresponsibility to send these treasures back to Cambodia as long as there is no peace. Art, too, deserves asylum. Would this amount to an interference in the internal affairs of Cambodia? Sure it would; but nothing as egregious as those internal affairs themselves. •

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NOTEBOOK

UNCANDID CAMERA: The Clinton White House tends to harbor exceptionally warm feelings toward the movie industry, and vice versa, so it's sad to learn they've had a falling out. The new movie *Contact*, directed by Robert Zemeckis (a Clinton campaign contributor, no less) uses actual video images of Clinton in a misleading way. The movie has the president warning the public to stay calm about reports of alien life—advice that the president has never in fact given. It's all just special effects, but White House spokesman Mike McCurry says it's wrong when "the president's image, which is his alone to control, is used in a way that would lead a viewer to imagine that he had said something that he didn't really say." Quite right. Only the president can use his image in a way that would lead a viewer to imagine that he had said something he didn't really say.

FUND-RAISING PIETY WATCH: "I think it is sick," preached Senator John Kerry, speaking of the campaign finance system. "Do people get access? Yes, and I think it is wrong." Well, not *so* wrong. As part of a July fund-raising weekend in Nantucket, the Massachusetts Democrat hosted a brunch at the posh home of his heiress wife, Teresa Heinz; during the weekend, contributors giving up to $20,000 strolled the beach with lawmakers, doubtless exchanging complaints about the horrors of corruption. The weekend's estimated take: $4 million. "I have come to loathe the whole system," says Herb Holtz, a Boston lawyer and former Democratic fund-raiser, who partook in some of the festivities. Also on the guest list—and on leave from the Senate panel investigating campaign finance abuses—were Democratic senators Bob Torricelli of New Jersey and Max Cleland of Georgia. They were, we are sure, on a fact-finding mission.

BOSNIA BEACH BUM: While British troops were in northern Bosnia, staging a successful operation to hunt down two war criminals indicted by the International War Crimes Tribunal, the most infamous of the wanted men was sunning himself on the Montenegrin riviera. Residents of a coastal village there told a French news service that Ratko Mladic—who faces charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity—was vacationing with his wife and a complement of fifteen bodyguards. Although Montenegrin authorities deny it, it seems quite possible that the stories are true, given that Mladic has been seen frequently traveling across Serbia. All of which makes one wonder. After all, in order for Mladic and his entourage to travel from his bunker in Han Pijesak, conveniently located in the American sector, to the sunny Montenegrin coast, he had to pass through areas heavily patrolled by U.S.-led NATO troops. Eternal vigilance.

QUICK STUDY: Whitewater independent counsel Kenneth Starr concluded this week that Vincent Foster killed himself. This, a mere four years after the White House aide's death and in the wake of three separate investigations that came to the exact same conclusion. Coming soon from Starr: Oswald was lone assassin, *Titanic* struck iceberg.

TO DIE FOR: New York's *Daily News*, always trying to make sense of mayhem, had this to say about the murder of fashion designer Gianni Versace: "Gianni Versace, who epitomized eye-poppingly outrageous flamboyance, was killed by a man so ordinary-looking that witnesses had trouble remembering what he looked like. That Versace's fabulous life should have been taken by someone so colorless was the final insult." So, if the murderer had been an unforgettably hot young hunk in a three-button linen suit with side vents and scissor pleats, replete with a hand-stitched silk shirt in the most too, too shade of aubergine, then the murder would have been a compliment?

CLIENT PRIVILEGE: On a recent episode of CNBC's "Hardball," Republican pollster Kellyanne Fitzpatrick was busy heaping praise on campaign finance overlord Fred Thompson. "The measure of the man here as to why I think Senator Thompson is the right guy for this job," she began, "is not because he was an actor, Watergate counselor...." That's when Chris Matthews, the show's host, jumped to expose her little spin game. "He's one of your clients," he said, noting that Thompson had hired her as a paid consultant. "No, no," she pleaded; Thompson deserved praise because he was so, so savvy in dealing with the press. "[It's] because he has kept his mouth shut for seven months. He did absolutely no media," she implored. "This is a guy who probably eats lunch by himself every day. Everyone has assailed him. But the gist of it is that you still have a sufficiently respectful media...." Actually, there may be a third explanation for Fitzpatrick's admiration. According to *The New York Post*, she started dating him several months ago. Stand by your man.

EYES ON THE PRIZEFIGHTER: A highlight of mid-July's National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's convention was the presentation of the organization's President's Award to boxing promoter Don King. According to news accounts, NAACP President Kweisi Mfume praised King's philanthropy, likening him to Jackie Robinson for advancing the cause of minority athletes. Of course, Mfume neglected to mention some of King's other accomplishments: a manslaughter conviction and an imminent federal retrial for insurance fraud. Coming soon at the NAACP: the annual Mike Tyson Award celebrating the Hunger for Victory. •

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PHILADELPHIA POSTCARD

LAMEFELLAS

By Mark F. Bernstein

Family and friends of the six accused mobsters pack the bride's side of the Philadelphia courtroom. The oldest of the spectators must be 80, the youngest, wearing a Catholic school tunic and saddle shoes, no more than 15. As the defendants accused of murder are brought in, they wave innocently. A few blow kisses. I sit on the groom's side—the Commonwealth's—which is empty.

The six are being retried for plotting the 1985 assassination of Frank "Frankie Flowers" D'Alfonso, a small-time bookmaker who had allegedly failed to pay sufficient respect to the man who authorities say was then the boss of Philadelphia's Mafia, Nicodemo "Little Nicky" Scarfo. Little Nicky is in from the federal prison at Leavenworth, seated now behind bulletproof glass. Joining him, cops say, are his onetime underlings: Salvatore "Chuckie" Merlino, Francis "Faffy" Ianarella, the Narducci brothers, Frank and Phil, and Joseph Ligambi.

Philadelphia, bless it, is one of the few places that can still put on a good mob trial. And this trial may be one of the last of its kind. The mob, at least the mythical one we have come to lionize in movies like *The Godfather*, has reached the end of its gene pool. Al Capone has given way to Vinnie "Chin" Gigante, the alleged head of the New York mob now on trial for multiple murder, and pleading, of all embarrassing things, the insanity defense. Gigante has spent the last few years wandering around the streets of Greenwich Village in his bathrobe, muttering to himself and urinating on the sidewalk. The prosecution says he did this to convince the feds he was nuts. Maybe, but it's still not the sort of performance that Mario Puzo could work with.

The Philadelphia Mafia's tortured genealogy in the fifteen years since the murder of boss Angelo Bruno reads like an anti-Genesis: Bruno, "The Gentle Don," begat Phil "Chicken Man" Testa, whose mail-bomb murder was celebrated in the Bruce Springsteen song "Atlantic City"; Testa's son, Sal, who succeeded his father, was bumped off soon after, allegedly for jilting his fiancée, "Chuckie" Merlino's daughter; Little Nicky then presided for several years before the feds put him away on racketeering charges; John Stanfa, who was Bruno's driver the night he was murdered, was said to finally take over, but he, too, is in prison now. To the extent anyone runs La Cosa Nostra anymore, it is reportedly a man named Ralph Natale, who, to let you know how far things have fallen, lives in Jersey.

No matter. We hang on to the dear old gang of our imagination and a thousand goomba movies. The black, Asian, Hispanic and Russian gangs that have replaced the Italians are a lot harder to make fantasy out of. The old mob, at least in its fictional depiction, could be romanced into seeming a sort of civilization: it had a code of behavior, a hierarchy. The mindless criminality you see on display in "Homicide" or in your local courthouse does not lend itself to romance.

The mob still has a hold on my imagination, but, sitting in the courtroom, it's hard to keep it up. The steroid-addled wise guys sport huge watches and gold bracelets; the days of pinstriped suits and black shirts are gone. Most wear basketball shoes and nylon warm-up suits—a South Philadelphia tuxedo, it's called. "Skinny" Joey Merlino, reportedly the mob's number two and "Chuckie" Merlino's son, is comparatively dapper in a checked workshirt and hiking boots. This has been the subject of a fawning Philadelphia *Daily News* profile ("LA CLOTHES-A NOSTRA," read the headline), including breathless, ungrammatical fashion commentary from Joey's lawyer. ("He could wear a T-shirt and look well in it.") From $2,000 suits and $500 shoes to gym clothes; it's like watching the retrogression of man.

In the courtroom's audience there is an easy camaraderie between reputed mobsters and cops. A man named George Borgesi chats amiably with detectives and journalists. "He talks to everyone," one of the cops says. "That's gonna be his downfall." Borgesi makes a good sidekick—Joe Pesci to Joey's Robert DeNiro. Until recently, the cops described him as a "mob wannabe," but he is now believed to be a "made" member for supposedly having killed a rival mobster two years ago. The victim was shot in the head, eight dollar bills stuffed up his rectum to symbolize his greed, and the body set on fire. A touch of the old class.

That moment of panache was rare, though. These are not really guys who do it with style. Consider the attempted murder of reputed hit man John Veasey. Veasey had been warned by the FBI that there was a contract on him. He ignored the warning because, as he said, "I got a problem with authority." While Veasey was discussing the numbers racket with "Al Pajamas" Pagano, alleged mobster Frank Martines snuck up from behind. "Bye, John-John," he said, shooting Veasey twice in the back of the head. Incredibly, Veasey turned around and demanded, "Frankie, why the fuck did you shoot me?" "Because you talk too much," Martines sneered, shooting Veasey in the chest and again in the head and then setting upon him with a knife. Bleeding from four bullet wounds and seven stab wounds, Veasey grabbed both Martines and Pagano and threw them down the stairs before running into the street. He survived and testified for the government.

In her closing statement, the assistant district attorney hammers away not just at the defendants in the D'Alfonso case, but at the whole ludicrous affair between

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Americans and their mob. "This is an organization that commits murder!" she shouts. The defense attorneys erupt. One woman on the bride's side seethes, "Object! Object!" through gritted teeth. Joey and his pals shake their heads in disgust, while a Merlino sister passes around a bag of root beer logs. Not to worry. The jury acquitted all six defendants after deliberating for less than two hours. Borgesi grabbed one of the reporters when the verdict was announced and kissed her. Joey, more demure, kissed her on the cheek before leaving to attend a victory party in South Philadelphia. On his way out, someone asked what he thought of his father's acquittal.

"Thank God for an honest jury," he said.

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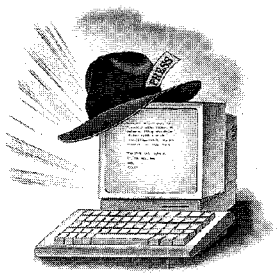
MEXICO CITY DISPATCH

VIVA LA DEVOLUCIÓN

By Alejandro Ramirez

For once, Mexicans and Americans, normally discordant neighbors, seemed to share the same jubilation. On July 8, two days after Mexico's ruling party lost control of Congress, two state governorships and the powerful mayorship of Mexico City, *The New York Times* hailed the "TASTE OF DEMOCRACY IN MEXICO" at last. Relations between the two countries, the paper predicted, would "be healthier and more harmonious as a result." *The Houston Chronicle* noted that Mexico was, after more than six decades of oligarchic, one-party rule, finally entering "a new way of life." And *The Washington Post* simply gushed: "THREE CHEERS FOR MEXICO."



There was, of course, good reason to celebrate. For the first time since it was founded in 1929, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) had lost its corrupt hold over Mexico. But missing in all the jubilation was a recognition of the bad news: in the Mexicans' first truly free exercise in democracy, they had elected an unapologetic left-winger, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, as the new mayor of Mexico City, the country's second-ranking post. From his new perch, this son of one of Mexico's most revered presidents, Lazaro Cardenas, is now one of the leading candidates to win the presidency in 2000. Though the American press has greeted Cardenas as a genuine democrat, he once flourished within the PRI's corrupt bureaucracy, holding positions, among other things, as a deputy secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and governor of the state of Michoacán. It was only in 1987, when he ran for the presidency, that Cardenas split from the PRI—and then only to create a coalition of communists, socialists, Maoists and Trotskyites.

At the time, Mexico's Nobel Prize-winning essayist and poet, Octavio Paz, warned: "Cardenism is ... an association of parties, an amorphous association that does not have a clear ideology. There are groups that are Socialist, and others have a floating ideology." What little core Cardenism had, however, was clearly antiquated. Cardenas insisted that the new party's objective was to carry out the nationalist program of the Mexican revolution—in other words, to use the state to redistribute wealth and nationalize industries, as his father had.

After the 1988 election, when the PRI seemed to brazenly steal the presidency from him, Cardenas formed, with some of the most radical elements of his coalition, the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD). The PRD defended revolutionary nationalism and denounced *el gringo* to the north. "The modernization of the center," he said in a 1988 speech, "is nothing more than a new face of fascism."

Today, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the PRD has moderated itself. Yet, even as it denounces the PRI's one-party rule, it endorses Fidel Castro's one-man rule in Cuba. Outside the PRD's office in Mexico City, vendors happily hawk T-shirts with pictures of Che Guevara. "I think he would like to turn things back," says William Ratliff, a Latin American scholar at the Hoover Institute. Indeed, Rosa Albina Garavito, a member of the PRD's economic team, told *The Los Angeles Times* last week that, unlike the Labour Party in England, the Democratic Revolution Party had never moved forward. "The PRD's economic project," she said, "is the same as when the party was founded."

There is plenty of evidence to support her. Only two years ago, after the peso collapsed, the PRD's leadership decried the U.S.-led financial bailout, saying the loans would never be repaid and, worse, would subvert the country's sovereignty. (The package was repaid in less than two years.) The PRD also opposed the privatization of state-owned enterprises and the North American Free Trade Agreement.

And some of the ideas contained in the PRD's economic program are either absurd or dangerous. Repeating the mistakes that contributed to Mexico's economic crisis during the 1970s, the PRD calls for increased social spending and reduced taxes. At the same time, it promises to control inflation. And, perhaps out of filial piety, Cardenas refuses to accept the end of communal ownership of agricultural land—the *ejido* system that was institutionalized by his father during the agrarian reforms of the late 1930s and was privatized by President Carlos Salinas in 1991 after decades of economic stagnation in the countryside.

Other PRD proposals range from stopping foreign ownership of Mexican banks and rewriting NAFTA to restricting the autonomy of Mexico's central bank and

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divesting workers' money from newly devised private pension funds.

For now, all of these remain just proposals, since the PRD does not hold a majority in Congress. However, using his new pulpit in the municipal palace, Cardenas could become the Mexican Jacques Chirac and run and win a third bid for the presidency in 2000.

Of course, no one ever said that transforming a one-party state into a democracy would be easy. And it is possible that, if Cardenas prevails in 2000, he will lead a less radical government than he has espoused. But, even if he doesn't, the voters, for the first time in nearly a century, will have the power to boot him out—and that is the good news in Mexico.

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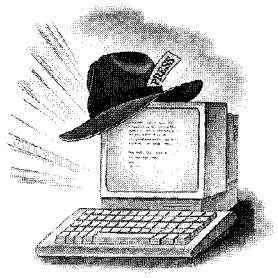
JERUSALEM DISPATCH

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

By Gershom Gorenberg

Ehud Barak speaks in a low voice and rests his large hands in his lap. It's easy to imagine the strong, stubby fingers wrapped around a gun—somewhat harder to picture them fluttering over a piano keyboard or repairing a clock, the ex-general's favorite hobbies, love affairs with complexity. Ten minutes into his conversation with me, as Barak compares peace negotiations with the Palestinians to Greco-Roman wrestling—"a form of struggle with agreed rules"—the big hands finally rise and pound at the air in his tiny Knesset office. A smile comes later. The recently elected leader of Israel's opposition Labor Party has not yet mastered the media-age candidate's skill of emoting instantly, convincingly, whether he means it or not.



That didn't keep the 55-year-old Barak from winning Labor's June primary in a walk, taking 50 percent of the vote in a four-way race. Labor had been in disarray since last year's national election, when Shimon Peres defied the odds and lost to Benjamin Netanyahu. Labor wanted a leader and a prime ministerial candidate with national appeal, and Barak fit the bill. Just two-and-a-half years ago, Barak retired from the pinnacle of Israel's military—he was both the chief of staff and the country's most decorated soldier, with medals for bravery and excellence earned in operations that remain secret. Barak, his supporters believe, won swing voters who feared that Peres was willing to make dangerous concessions to the Arabs in pursuit of a fantasized New Middle East.

That thinking fits the article of faith that peace and security are the only issues that move voters. Ironically, Barak doesn't seem to buy this. Himself the kibbutz-born child of Israel's elite, he'd like Labor to shed an elitist image that has turned off that half of the country that feels economically and socially left out.

In the party race, Barak apparently wasn't hurt by lingering allegations that he mishandled the aftermath of an army training accident, though Netanyahu's team has already begun using that ammunition. And criticism that Barak is a "Bibi-clone"—egotistical, unprincipled, a political neophyte with strongman inclinations—also did little damage. Even Labor's doves think that Barak's centrist line is the key to regaining power.

Last election, the right played to cautious backers of the Oslo accords with the slogan, "Netanyahu—Making Secure Peace." Since then, the peace process has gone into a coma. "Someone suggested," Barak says approvingly, "that I take that sticker, cross out 'Making,' fill in 'Blabbing About,' then write underneath, 'Barak Will Make It.' " That theme—Bibi "doesn't DO anything, just talk, talk, talk"—is one Barak plays with many variations. "Our hold on Jerusalem has gotten weaker, not stronger, in the last year.... There's twice as many [Palestinian] cops there. Our authority is evaporating. And all he does is strike poses—which boomerang. Look at Har Homah," Barak says, referring to the government's controversial housing development, meant to buttress Israel's hold on East Jerusalem. "There won't be one building there for another year and a half. But as a tool to unite the world against us, and force it to reveal that it's closer to the Palestinian stand on Jerusalem than to ours, it's been very effective." (Barak says he, too, favors building at the site, but with the right timing.)

Barak's alternative is hard-nosed peacemaking: "Emotionally, I'm very attached to the Land of Israel. It hurts me to think that a few kilometers from [the settlement and biblical site of] Beit El, there ... might even be a Palestinian state. But I'm sober enough to know that's how it is, if we want to stay forever in Beit El." Beit El, between Ramallah and Nablus, is in the heavily populated Palestinian region that is the natural core of any Palestinian entity. Religious rightists built the settlement to prevent Israel from giving the area away. It's unclear how Barak expects both to "remain forever in Beit El" and reach peace "without dictating" to the Palestinians. Like his mentor, the late Yitzhak Rabin, he insists that any plan he proposes will instantly become an opening position to be whittled away. His rhetoric could attract both peaceniks and hardliners, but it also explains criticism that Barak is a blank mirror in which everyone sees his own political image.

Polls after the primaries showed Barak running several points ahead of Netanyahu, with nearly a fifth of the country undecided. For Labor, those are disappointing numbers, given that the prime minister has

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stumbled from scandal, to diplomatic stalemate, to bitter clashes with erstwhile allies. What's more, experience shows that the undecided vote consists mainly of disgruntled Likud supporters. Most are Jews with roots in Muslim countries, lower-middle or lower class, with a strong sentiment for religion even if they're not Orthodox. For them, Labor represents the patronizing, secular establishment they met when they immigrated in the 1950s and '60s. The Likud sanctioned the filial bitterness of poor cousins. In elections, they flock home to the right-wing party, producing the virtual deadlock that has characterized Israeli politics for a generation.

Barak's advisers hope his military record can break the tie; one told me she doubts that Barak will deviate from Labor's moderately conservative economics. But lately Barak has attacked Netanyahu for "economic Darwinism, Friedmanism, Reaganism," and he has called for balancing the free market with "social economics." Typically, he painted that centrist balance in broad strokes, with few specifics. But Labor, he told party members, needed not only a change of policy but a change of heart. "We're a political organization. The Likud succeeded in being a family, a home. We've got to change."

"We've put on airs," Barak tells me, alluding to Labor's we-built-the-country attitude. "I intend to tell the generation of the immigrant camps [of the '50s] ... that they contributed far more than we've wanted to admit." In a huge leap from previous Labor leaders, he says, "I want to ask forgiveness in the name of the Labor Party."

Such thinking borrows from Shlomo Ben-Ami, a Moroccan-born Knesset member who was the surprise of the primaries: in an out-of-nowhere campaign, he took 14 percent of the vote. It's Ben-Ami, the passionate maverick, who began preaching that Labor couldn't win on peace alone, but had to cast off its elitist image and economics, and show respect for Jewish tradition. While veteran Labor leaders have shunned Ben-Ami, Barak has embraced him. Ben-Ami says he suggested to Barak the idea of a historic apology. A Barak staffer has been running a below-radar-altitude operation to recruit grass-roots activists outside Labor's old constituency; the staffer—and probably the idea—came from Ben-Ami.

"Ehud is convinced cognitively" that he has to reach poor neighborhoods and towns, says Ben-Ami. "The question is if he's internalized it." That crucial ambiguity is partly a matter of Barak's style. In his personal life, say those who know him, he's intensely warm. "He's a very huggy dad," an ex-staffer told me. "He calls his wife twenty times a day. He comes late to meetings, because if he's on the phone with someone, he won't hang up." In contrast to Bibi, his family life is solid; he's not a womanizer. Yet Barak can seem aloof. Says a Labor insider, "Ehud's not cold. But his body language is a problem. His smile isn't whole-hearted, his hug isn't full."

Barak is also a very determined man—single-mindedly so, critics would say. In urging that Labor reach out to the veteran immigrants, and recent ones from the former Soviet Union, he may be coldly applying military doctrine: fight on the enemy's territory. Yet given his choice of words—"a family, a home"—the strategy may also appeal to him viscerally. And in a society that likes to regard itself as a small clan, where political battles are waged with the passion and hurt of a family fight, Barak's message could have deep emotional resonance—if, of course, he can sound like he means it.

GERSHOM GORENBERG is the op-ed editor of *The Jerusalem Report.*

MEDIA REX

MIGHT HAVE BEEN

By William Powers

Might magazine isn't quite dead yet—the final issue is now on the stands, with a cover story that wonders, "Are Black People Cooler Than White People?" But the plug has officially been pulled, and I'm in a mild state of mourning. If you've never heard of *Might*, you're in excellent company. It is, or was, an odd bimonthly founded a few years ago in San Francisco by three friends in their early 20s, and it was preoccupied with questioning the basic workings of our media-pickled culture. It covered everything from the presidential race to the Web to the career of David Hasselhoff, with a range of voices that ran from wildly satiric to deeply earnest. But implicitly *Might* was always posing one question: In an age when it seems everything and everyone is for sale, is it still possible to speak honestly about the world—and, while we're at it, have a good laugh?

Might's answer was affirmative, but it took the reader a few issues to figure that out. The debut issue was a passionate, overwrought protest against the Generation X pigeonhole into which the trend-obsessed national media (for which demographics are destiny) had stuffed the children of the '70s and '80s. But *Might* quickly abandoned its generational fetish, and with the next issue began to acquire its peculiar take on the world. "Everything after that reflected our true spirit, which is meaner and weird," Editor David Eggers told me, shortly after he and his colleagues decided to shut down the magazine, having tired of running it on the cheap while looking for investors to keep it afloat.

Might was born in 1994, two years after Eggers graduated from the University of Illinois at Champaign and moved to San Francisco. There he hooked up with David Moodie and Marny Requa, two classmates from Lake Forest High School outside of Chicago. Like Eggers, they had landed in the Bay Area after college.

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Magazine addicts all, they got to talking about a new kind of magazine for people their age, pooled their resources and came up with $10,000. *Might* was born.

The budget remained minuscule: the only reason the product looked so sharp was that Moodie and Eggers had extensive backgrounds in graphic design. Indeed, *Might* paid most of its writers nothing, and the *Might*ists themselves—the three founders were later joined by editors Paul Tullis and Zev Borow, and publisher Lance Crapo, all in their 20s—took no salaries until the last few issues. Requa waitressed, while Moodie and Eggers lived on freelance writing and artistic work.

So the magazine was a classic labor-of-love story, though the substance was often something less than loving. The contents page, which was largely fictional, grew into a platform from which *Might* launched slingshot fusillades at the info elite, such as the following, which appeared in 1995:

76 How to Absolutely & Completely Bastardize and Emasculate a Perfectly Good Magazine by Pretending that Imbecilic, Star-gazing Celebrity Journalism Isn't Imbecilic, Star-gazing Celebrity Journalism If It's written by People Like Martin Amis, by Tina Brown

78 A Riveting Article About John Travolta, by the inimitable Martin Amis, with Some Help Here and There From the Good Humble Folks at *Entertainment Weekly*

80 Can You Be a Feminist and Love Men Too?! by Naomi Wolf

82 Can You Be a Provocative Thinker and a Good Journalist and Still Pimp Your Work Out to Drivel Like *Cosmopolitan*? Also by Naomi Wolf

85 Harrummph harrummph harrummph by William Safire

88 Same Old Shit by Bob Greene

90 How My Lovely Daughter's Smile Gives Me New Insight About the World's Injustices by Anna Quindlen

92 Politics! Entertainment! Can't Tell the Difference! by Frank Rich

This is insider humor of a rather rarefied order. To get the second half of the Amis joke, you had to know that Amis had written a *New Yorker* profile of John Travolta, which contained several quotes that were apparently lifted from an article in *Entertainment Weekly*. A subtler kind of media-bashing was served up in *Might*'s "Gaywatch" column, which pretended to be outing celebrities like Sting, Michael Eisner, Ashley Judd, Michael Crichton and George Stephanopoulos as secretly gay, but was actually a send-up of the media's obsession with hidden homosexuality.

But *Might*'s editors realized that their fixation on the media exemplified the very cultural rot they deplored, and a kind of unsparing self-awareness became their trademark. One result was the "Sellout Issue," arguably the zenith of the journal's brief career. That issue's cover was entirely given over to an ad for Goldschläger schnapps liqueur, which in turn was partially covered by a *New Yorker*-style promotional flap announcing in huge letters: MIGHT SELLS OUT. Inside, there were whorish tributes to advertisers, including such small-print plugs as: "Tanqueray welcomes you to page 11." The issue's music reviews were written by the record-company publicists. But the *pièce de résistance* was the last page (presented by Miller Lite Ice), on which *Might*'s editors reprinted a letter they had received from the office of John Mack Carter, president of Hearst Magazines Enterprises. It was a brush-off to *Might*'s request for financial backing from Hearst, which is just the sort of giant media company that the magazine loved to hate.

When I asked Moodie about *Might*'s efforts at self-promotion, he said, in utter deadpan, "From top to bottom, every one of the *Might* staff was glory-obsessed." It was this sort of tonal balancing act, nicely blending sincerity and sarcasm, that made the magazine stand out among the countless journals launched in the last five years by and for twentysomethings. Only *Might* understood fully that the way to reach an audience so sophisticated about the media is to strike several contradictory poses at once—earnest and ironic, star-struck and above-it-all, self-referential and straight—and to turn the resulting tension into the main event. If its essays and journalism often lacked polish, it had more heart than *Spy*, more courage than *Rolling Stone* and enough brains to keep even the most serious culture sponges on their toes.

Although *Might* published just sixteen issues, and the print run never exceeded 30,000, it had a quiet following, particularly among magazine pros. Some of *Might*'s better ideas turned up in magazines with circulations in the hundreds of thousands. *Details* magazine actually apologized for using a *Might* gimmick—running the editors' rough mockup of the magazine pages at the front of the issue. According to Eggers and Moodie, Microsoft operatives paid more than one visit to *Might*'s tiny, cluttered office and hired the editors to do freelance work for its online Gen X magazine, *Mint*. *New York* magazine paid them to write its Oscars prediction section and then, says Eggers, chopped it to bits. "We got that a lot, people just wanting our 'thing,' whatever that was," he says. "But the funny thing was, once they got it, it tended to be more than they wanted."

The group approached potential funders with plans to raise the circulation to 100,000, but it required about $1.5 million—more than anyone was willing to invest. When the most promising deal, a proposal for the publishers of *Wired* magazine to fund *Might*, fell through, the group called it a day. To the selfish reader, who would have hated *Might* to be subsumed into someone else's media empire, there's solace in the fact that *Might* stayed independent to the end—and in the news that its makers are not about to drift off into the ether. No sooner was the demise announced, when *Spin* magazine named Moodie its new features editor. Eggers had offers from both *GQ* and *Esquire*, and chose the latter. The others are fielding offers. So, the bereft can tell themselves that *Might*'s "thing" will live on in these other unlikely places, if only between the lines. •

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Mr.President: Order the Arrest of War Criminals in Bosnia Now!

COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

740 Fifteenth Street NW • Washington, DC 20005-1009 • 202-662-1595 • coalition@cij.org

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

July 15, 1997

Dear Mr. President:

During the savage war against Bosnia - half a century after the civilized world declared that it would "never again" allow genocide to occur - over 200,000 men, women, and children were slaughtered in the heart of Europe in a genocidal rampage euphemistically referred to as "ethnic cleansing." Thousands of women were herded into camps where they were systematically raped as part of a larger campaign designed to humiliate, subjugate, and ultimately to destroy the Bosnian nation. Many more people were tortured or forced to flee for their lives.

Some of the many men believed to have organized and committed these crimes have been indicted as war criminals by the International War Crimes Tribunal, which was established by the United Nations with the active support of the United States. Thanks also to leadership by the United States, the Dayton Accords empower NATO peacekeeping troops deployed in Bosnia (SFOR) to arrest indicted perpetrators of these crimes whenever and wherever they encounter them. Yet, despite numerous such encounters and our intimate knowledge of where most of these men live and work, only one indictee has thus far been apprehended by these troops.

The undersigned organizations represent millions of Americans across the United States. We are deeply distressed that indicted war criminals are living freely and with impunity, while American soldiers - the largest contingent of the NATO force - have apparently been denied the authority to make arrests. By pursuing such a policy, the United States may have been colluding in the protection of individuals charged with war crimes. We are encouraged by the recent arrest in Prijedor by British NATO troops and sincerely hope that this represents the beginning of a new, more aggressive policy by SFOR. We call upon you, Mr. President, to exert your leadership and take whatever diplomatic measures are necessary to ensure that the U.S.-led NATO forces in Bosnia meet their moral obligation to bring the rest of these men to justice without delay.

We are hopeful that a commitment by the United States to fulfill this mandate will persuade our allies to complete the task of arresting all war-crimes indictees now in Bosnia, especially the architects of the genocide. If our allies are unwilling, however, the United States must take the lead, accept the risk of confrontation, and act on its own.

It is futile to repeatedly state that the countries of the former Yugoslavia should arrest their own war criminals; it is clear they have no such intentions. And so long as war criminals are at large and justice is not done, the wounds of war cannot heal, refugees cannot return to their homes, and reconciliation, lasting peace, and a civil society cannot be achieved in Bosnia. A successful exit for U.S. troops will not be possible, and their many good works will have been wasted, if they leave behind a country in which persons indicted for war crimes continue to wield significant power and make a mockery of the rule of law.

Mr. President, at the dedication of the Holocaust Museum you reiterated the pledge "never again" to permit genocide. If the War Crimes Tribunal and the quest for peace in Bosnia should fail because U.S.-led NATO troops are unwilling to apprehend indicted perpetrators of crimes against humanity, the civilized world will have lost the opportunity to restore some credence to this tarnished pledge. We appeal to you not to allow this to happen.

Sincerely,

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ORGANIZATIONS

AFL-CIO
AFSCME: American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees
Action Council for Peace in the Balkans
African Methodist Episcopal Church, Commission on Missions
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Association of University Women
American Baptist Churches U.S.A., International Ministries, Africa, Europe and Middle East Desk
American Indian Heritage Foundation
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress
American Kurdish Information Network
American Muslim Council
American Nurses Association
Amnesty International, USA
Anti-Defamation League
Arab American Institute
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Business and Professional Women,U.S.A.
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Church World Service
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Columban Fathers' Justice and Peace Office Washington DC
Communications Workers of America
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Episcopal Church, U.S.A.
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Office for World Community
Evangelicals for Social Action
Feminist Majority
Friends of Bosnia
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Jesuit Refugee Services
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Older Women's League
Physicians for Human Rights
Project on African Americans in International Law
Psychologists for Social Responsibility
Rabbinical Assembly
Rabbinical Council of America
Refugees International
SAGE: Students Against Genocide
Simon Wiesenthal Center
SPEAR: Sigma Public Education and Research Foundation of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America
UNITE: Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees
United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ, United Church Board for World Ministries
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union
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Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation
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Women's League for Conservative Judaism
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INDIVIDUALS

(organizational affiliation for identification only)

Morris Abram, former U.S. Ambassador at the United Nations
Morton Abramowitz, former U. S. Ambassador to Turkey
Bert B. Beach, Vice President, International Religious Liberty Association and General Secretary, Council on Inter-Church Relations, General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists
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Reverend Ted Keating, Director for Justice and Peace, Catholic Conference of Major Superiors † of Men's Institutes
Mel Levine, former Member of Congress
Paul Nitze, former Ambassador-at-Large and Special Advisor to the President on Arms Control
Roberts Owen, Dayton Accords negotiator
David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
George Shultz, former Secretary of State
John Silber, President, Boston University
Susan Sontag, author, director, literary theorist, and human rights activist
Roberta Wohlstetter, historian and author, holder of the Presidential Medal of Freedom
Miriam Young, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace

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ABOUT FACE

By Hanna Rosin

This time Kisha does not dare say one word. She does not cock her head or roll her eyes or suck her teeth or give any sign of her trademark defiance. She knows what the fifteen other suddenly tense students in her employment training class know: someone among them is in trouble, serious trouble, and the last time Kisha stepped in to help him she got burned, too.

Instructor David Sykes drags his chair so he is inches from the face of the troublemaker, a skinny, ponytailed kid named Tyciris. Even seated, the bulky, tetchy Sykes is menacing. The badly ventilated, claustrophobic basement suddenly seems hotter. Sykes lets loose a bully laugh, before laying down the full force of his, and society's, judgment: "You think you'll ever get a job looking like that, punk?"

The punk has come voluntarily, believe it or not, to STRIVE, a program that aims to make the poor in cities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Chicago employable. Only a few years ago, STRIVE would have been shunned by social workers. Now, one year into the welfare-to-work experiment, even liberals have come to accept the value of blunt threats. Unforgiving deadlines have done more to push people off the rolls than decades of nurturing and cajoling. In the new no-excuses atmosphere, programs like STRIVE—gruff and pitiless to the point of being abusive—are thriving, because they seem to work. Of the 319 clients who have graduated over the past two years from the Boston program where Sykes teaches, 259 found jobs and 170 are still working—a phenomenal 81 percent placement rate. The average salary of graduates is $7.45 an hour, and they're not all sweeping floors. One of the program's goals is to avoid dead-end jobs, so STRIVE will only send someone to a sweeping job if there is some promise that one day they can get beyond it. The program's proud list of graduate positions includes customer service representatives, clerks, nursing assistants and sales associates, to pick some of the most promising. All that, for only $1,500 a client, paid for by local foundations and businesses.

Started twelve years ago in a basement in East Harlem, STRIVE was supposed to be just another employment skills program for anyone interested, not a vehicle for moving people off the dole. But welfare reform's instinct to experiment has turned it into a reluctant model. Of all the many welfare-to-work efforts underway, STRIVE has emerged as one of the anointed. After "60 Minutes" aired a glowing segment on the New York program in May, President Clinton praised STRIVE in a radio address. These days, almost each week, a mayor calls the New York office to inquire (last month it was Los Angeles, Atlanta, St. Petersburg), and a new infusion of cash might make its mushrooming possible: Congress is encouraging states to use the $3 billion in the new budget for localized job training. And they've chosen STRIVE as one of six model programs.

STRIVE may fit the country's mood, but it doesn't particularly fit most welfare recipients' moods. STRIVE mostly does attitude training: no hard skills, like word processing; only soft skills, like general appearance and behavior. A General Accounting Office report praises STRIVE for its brutal honesty, for ridding clients of a "victim mentality," the feeling that their fate is out of their hands. In practice, that means kicking out of class anyone who is three minutes late with a lame excuse. Or anyone who rolls her eyes or sucks her teeth or stares sullenly at the floor one time too many.

In three weeks, Sykes means to transform his students from the sort of people who employers turn away without a glance to the sort they hire. This means beating out the habits of the street and replacing them with the habits of work. It means stripping them of all their defensive tics and fashion statements—the men of their Snoop Doggy Dogg braids and ponytails, the woman in the far back of the room of her mean expression and her defiantly crossed arms. It means teaching them that all of the affectations and artifacts of style they have adopted to mark themselves as special are worth nothing, paper armor.

It also means not everyone will make it. The unreasonable strictness is a built-in weeding process, and, in a way, it guarantees the program's success. This is the unpleasant secret of STRIVE's success rate: the program, by the very fact of its toughness, rejects the sure losers early on. In a typical class, thirty to thirty-five people will sign up for orientation, twenty-five will show up on the first day, and the twelve to fifteen with the most patience will graduate. STRIVE takes students at all levels, from women on welfare who have been kicked out of

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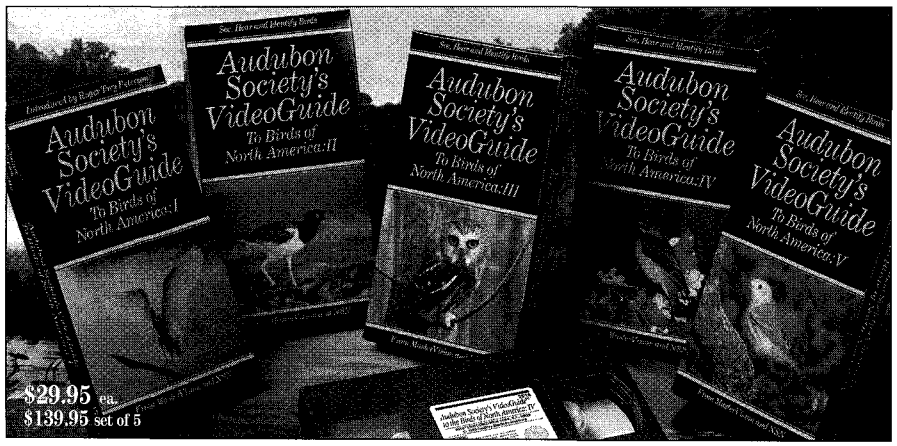
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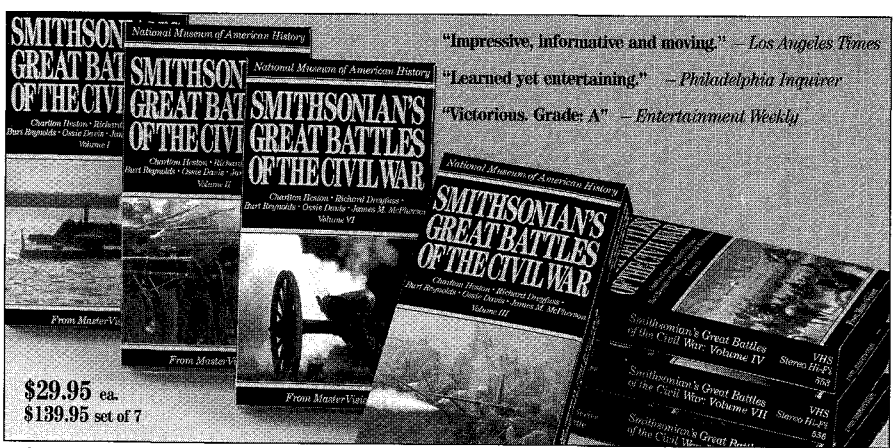
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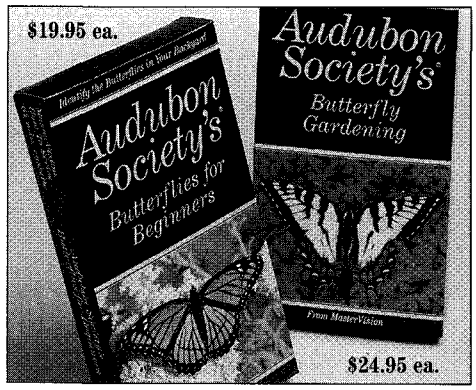

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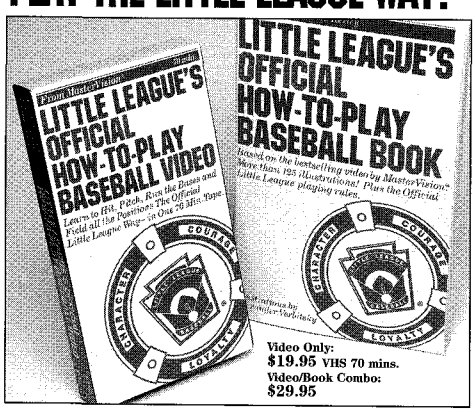

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every other government training program, to men fresh out of jail, to men and women temporarily out of work who just need some polishing. While there's no way to measure, it's probably the hardest cases who get kicked out or fed up, and rejoin the ranks of the unemployable. But, as Sykes might say, that doesn't mean the ones who stick it out are any picnic. Even among the good ones, there are those who will show up for interviews in spike heels and a hoochie dress. Then, when they get the job, they'll come in three days in a row at 9:00 sharp, then feel so proud they'll take a vacation. It's Sykes's job to rip them apart, bad habit by bad habit.

"You think that looks good?" Sykes says mockingly to Tyciris, the loose-lipped punk with the stiff ponytail.

"Yeah."

"Well, you need to cut it."

"You think I can't do my job with my hair like this?"

"No. That whole I-almost-was-a-pimp-but-I-couldn't-afford-the-perm look ain't working. The employer will put you in the corner next to Loquita with the big ole braids and forty pairs of earrings and the dude with the happy Afro with the gold streak down the middle and say, 'NEXT!' " Sykes says, picking up speed. "What's wrong with the orange fingernails and the nose ring and the 'Oh-my-God' [in a mock female pout]? Nobody's gonna hire that," he says, pointing to the ponytail. "Nobody. Now are you gonna cut it?"

"My hair is like my trademark. It's like a part of me."

"I see your hair, and it makes me want to start rapping. You live in your mama's house / She says jump you say how high / She says daddy you say yeah / You're 22 and you live in your mama's house with no job." The rap sours and turns mirthless. "If you didn't have your mama's house you wouldn't be sitting there with this fucked up hair and this fucked up attitude. Be a man. You're gonna make a decision right now. Are you gonna cut it?"

"I'll cut it."

"When? 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3—"

"Lunch. Tomorrow."

"No. You come in here tomorrow morning with your hair cut or don't come back. Are you gonna cut it?"

"I'm gonna cut it—sometime this week."

"You can leave then. Now." Tyciris picks up his ragged binder and walks out the door, leaving the class in a state of drowsy shock. Sykes waits a moment before he pounds in the lesson. "Do y'all understand what's going on?" Agitated and sweaty, he takes out his anger on what's left of his class. "You say you want to do this and that, to improve yourself, just get a chance, yet you can't even get past the simple cosmetics. It doesn't matter if you can do the job if you don't fit in. WAKE UP! We're fighting a battle here."

Tyciris walks out of the clean white house, and when he disappears to some street corner in Roxbury, he rejoins the hard-core unemployable, unreachable by any job training program so far. During the first week of the session, Sykes will kick out five more, for yapping during class, for not trying, for being stubbornly uncooperative; one will beg to be let back in, and then disappear again. Not one of the departures comes as a surprise to the staff. Terry Parham, the executive director, guessed the day before it happened that two cousins would get kicked out: showing up with a girlfriend is usually a telltale sign that you're not ready.

Those left over are considerably more manageable, although far from ready. There's Kisha, insolent in a sly and promising way, but marked with all the signs of failure: high-school dropout, teenage mother, never had a job. Shauna, sweet, willing, but otherwise ditto. Aaron and Christopher—both with spotty but hopeful work records, well-spoken and professional. Elsie, Tarisha, Joanne, a threesome stocked with evasive excuses who will wind up driving Sykes crazy. And Holly, the rare white person in the program, a former exotic dancer who can't stop biting her lime-green nails. Only a small percentage of the class is on public assistance (usually only about a third of STRIVE's graduates are) and everyone seems open enough to change their ways. But don't underestimate the transformation STRIVE accomplishes. To be overqualified here is not to be a neurosurgeon: one fast-talking woman was asked not to come back after orientation because she already had a job as a part-time cashier at Dunkin' Donuts. The rest are in a position to envy her.

Sykes dismisses the class for a break to let the shame of Tyciris sink in. When they return, it's time for a makeover. "Leave your problems at home," Sykes says. In an Oprah age, he's unusual for not being interested in your hopes and fears, the real you. He is interested in the self you can be made to become, or at least to appear. This is the essential part of stripping the victim mentality, tearing the focus of pride away from one narrow identity and moving it to a more universal one. What you should be proud of is your public role, the face you put up to the world, even if it's an innocent deception. If you want to get a job on Fenway Street, where the gay ad firms are, wear a yellow shirt, he advises. If you're after Newbury Street, where Chip and Muffy work, try a blue suit and penny loafers. He's more concerned with what you look like than what you *are* like. Perhaps because he knows that, to a real degree, the former dictates the latter.

Which is why he spends over an hour on handshakes. Sykes orders his students to line up outside in the narrow hallway. Each person has to smile, introduce themselves, shake Sykes's hand and explain why they should be let back into the room. All but one are exiled to the back of the line for at least a second try. "Hi. I'm Kisha," she says, and breaks out in giggles. Sykes glares at her. "What?" she asks childishly. "I smiled." The next time she is more sober. Aaron gets sent back again and again. It's only on the fourth try that he figures out it's because he's giving a homeboy shake, a wide-arc swoop down into a greedy grab, not a civilized, linear handshake. Holly jitters and shakes inside her loose pants and pulls at her hair nervously.

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Until she stands still, she won't get through.

Kim, one of the cousins, is the worst. Kim just won't smile, and by the sixth round she is deadly surly. "Look, my feet is hurtin'," she complains. Sykes is impassive. No smile, no pass. Two more times and she's had it. Her face hardened, she cries and storms out of the room. "People try to put you down," she yells back, as her cousin Renee storms out behind her. "I don't kick people out," Sykes says curtly after her. "They kick themselves out."

His class is nowhere near presentable yet. Sykes tries another tack. "Tell me about yourself," he asks, beginning a practice interview session. "I'm 19, I got two kids, I..." offers Kisha eagerly. "Not relevant," Sykes cuts her off. He does not want to know about her kids, because that's not really what the employer wants when he asks that deceptively friendly question. "I'm 27, and I got four kids and my papa lives down Dudley, and Ray-Ray just got out of jail and Bo-Bo's got to go to the doctor," Sykes says, mocking. "What does the employer care?" For the boss, Kisha needs to take on a new identity, so what's she got? "Well, I worked at McDonald's, and I like to do hair." "Okay," Sykes says, "that's a start." From this thin gruel the pro cooks up a convincing story. Here is who Kisha is: "I have experience working with food, with sales. I'm eager, hard-working. What kind of person are you looking for?"

Among the many facts not relevant about Kisha are that she's half Indian and that her 2-year-old twin daughters are named N'atavia and N'atasia (at the suggestion of the Russian lady who lived next door). That she gave up custody of the girls, grudgingly, to her mother, who now gets the welfare check. ("I feel like they're not gonna know me, except on weekends.") That she is technically homeless, and that she can't get a house or her girls back until she makes some money, which is why she tries to behave in class. That she's filled out applications at Toys-R-Us, Marshall's, K-Mart and McDonald's and gotten no response. That she did work at a McDonald's register one day but she was too slow, and when the "customers started rushin' up in my face, I got nervous." That her boss accused her of stealing $10 from the register, but "that's stupid. I don't steal."

To Sykes, this personal résumé adds up to one big Excuse. "I understand, but I got no understanding," he likes to say. "There are single mothers with six kids who get up and go to work every day with no excuses." He knows all the excuses before you even say them: (1) My boss is a racist. ("He's still a racist, and you're out of a job. Who wins?") (2) I have no money for the bus. ("But you got money to buy some weed and meet your boys downtown.") (3) I'm on welfare. I don't need to work. ("And you slip off all your gold rings and jewelry in the parking lot before you go to the welfare office.")

The class is now in its last week. Sykes's goading is more affectionate than mean now. The surviving students think they have him figured out, although they don't know him at all. He doesn't tell the class that only three years ago he was in jail, finishing off a six-year sentence for assault. (He reformed himself at STRIVE.) He has the class read Kisha the riot act and tell her how obnoxious she is, instead of doing it himself. Now she's decided "to pay attention and learn some things," Sykes announces proudly. The threesome—Elsie, Joanne and Tarisha—are "holding on by a thread," he says angrily. "They all got that same mentality, that 'I'm on welfare so I don't really have to be on time' thing." One day they show up, the next day they don't. Meanwhile, Aaron and Chris have turned out to be gems. Tomorrow they're leading the class on a field trip to two hotels and a health center, all desperate for workers. Sykes sums up how it is: "I'll stick my neck out for anyone," he says. "As long as they help themselves. But if they give me that you-supposed-to-help-me look I won't even look at them."

But the sudden peace is disruptive. As Sykes becomes more comprehensible, the program he is part of suddenly seems less so. It now seems like an accident of chemistry unlikely to be repeated by the dozens of cities desperate for a panacea. Few people could be so violently off-kilter, yet perfectly stable, the way Sykes is, or maintain a veneer of efficiency amid anarchy, the way Parham does. There aren't many trainers like Therese Fitzgerald, who has patience for the umpteenth domestic violence call, or Chris Carpenter, who relentlessly hunts down employers. And they all patiently follow up with their clients, for years. The depressing truth is, alchemy can rarely be replicated; programs that thrive in one neighborhood wilt in another. What if Massachusetts were not going through an economic boom? What if STRIVE didn't have such good contacts with local employers? What works here is much more elusive than low tolerance for a "victim mentality." Someone may dip into STRIVE and find it intolerable. His brother may be transformed. If welfare reform succeeds, it may only be by a series of happy accidents. •

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A bold welfare experiment fails.

UNDER THE UNDERCLASS

By Dana Milbank

The PR guy couldn't have hoped for more. As reporters scribbled, the CBS News camera zoomed in on a figure in incandescent orange, a radiant poster girl for Marriott hotels' lauded welfare-to-work program. The woman, a welfare mother named Charlene who would soon join the working world, was leading a ballroom full of Marriott executives and welfare caseworkers in a defiant chant. "I AM SOMEBODY!" she shouted. "RESPECT ME!" Fellow program participants erupted in a standing ovation. The CBS cameraman liked it so much he asked everybody to stage the whole thing again.

Marriott's program, Pathways to Independence, has been hailed as the country's greatest hope of a private-sector solution to the welfare problem: 77 percent of the program's participants are still in steady jobs a year after they graduate, earning paychecks and providing for their families without government handouts. President Clinton has publicly praised Marriott's program, and his welfare adviser, Bruce Reed, has called Marriott's effort "the best program I've heard of at a major company." In October 1996, I wrote a favorable story about the program in *The Wall Street Journal*; dozens of reports followed—on ABC, CBS and CNN and in papers from *The St. Petersburg Times* to the *Times* of London. The praise was well-deserved.

But on that day when Charlene posed for the cameras, Marriott's program was attempting something much more bold and difficult than before. Until that point, Pathways to Independence had carefully restricted its efforts to the easier cases—relatively well-functioning welfare recipients who were eager to find work. Now, with this graduating class of twelve, Marriott was hoping to demonstrate that it could take even some hard-core welfare cases, many of them homeless and recent drug addicts, and bring them into the workforce in an efficient, affordable way. The effort seemed to represent the best hope of coping with the question that still haunts welfare reform—what about the truly unemployable?

Eight months later, however, all Charlene's class has demonstrated is that welfare reform as we know it isn't going to work as we'd like it. Charlene's experience in the workplace is typical. She got a job with Marriott, and lost it for poor attendance; she was given a second chance, and lost that job, too. She has returned to the man whose blows had landed her in a battered-women's shelter. Another group member resumed his drug addiction and flunked a drug test after Marriott offered him a job. One participant dropped out and got pregnant, while yet another quit her job interviews and now works a few hours a week in fast food, still using her welfare check to support five children. Even some of those who kept their jobs are causing Marriott great aggravation. "Abominable," concludes Julia Gonzales of the D.C. Private Industry Council in Washington, which supplies the participants to Marriott. Late last year, the Marriott program called off the hard-case experiment and returned to its focus on the more likely successes, "balancing the program," a Marriott spokesman says, to include only a few tough cases in each class. "We bit off more than we could chew," confesses Kenneth Tully, one of the coordinators of Marriott's program. Affirms Janet Tully, the head of Marriott's program and Kenneth's mother, "There's no way we're going to go any deeper into the well. You're not going to find any company going that far down."

What is at stake in the Marriott experiment is immense. If welfare reform is to work, the private sector must make it work. A reform that shifts welfare recipients from one government check, in the form of an open dole, to another, in the form of a salary for make-work or for attending training classes, will be regarded as a failure. As Clinton has said, "only the private sector in America can prove that I was right to sign that bill." But Marriott's experience shows that even the best welfare-to-work effort in corporate America can't put the toughest welfare cases to work.

So far, the problem evident in Marriott's failure has been masked by the euphoria over figures that show the nation's welfare caseload has dropped by 24 percent over the last three years. The decline has made welfare-to-work efforts look easy—misleadingly so. Those reductions, like Marriott's earlier efforts, have come from skimming the most capable recipients off the rolls. Deeper in the pool of 4 million adults who remain on welfare, beyond those suffering temporary reversals, are the hard-core recipients: the homeless, the addicted, the

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battered, the disturbed, the illiterate and the criminal. Nobody knows exactly how many of these people there are, but most experts put the number at one-third of the total caseload, and Marriott's experience suggests that figure might be even higher.

The 1996 federal welfare law requires that, by 2002, the states must subject all but 20 percent of welfare recipients to the new five-year limit for public assistance. But what will happen to the people left behind by the private sector? What will happen to the most disadvantaged among the poor?

Charlene's group, which I tracked over eight months, was a tough challenge by any standards. All sixteen participants were black residents of Washington, D.C., who lived in shelters or with relatives. None had a credit card or a checking account. One had done time for manslaughter. Another said she had worked as a prostitute to raise drug money. But, for all their problems, they had strong motivation. Theirs was the first to begin training after enactment of the welfare overhaul in August—the first participants to know they'd be kicked off of welfare if they didn't find jobs soon. Several of them told me of the pressure they felt to find work.

Placed in charge of employing this crew was Christa Richardson, a 28-year-old newcomer to Marriott. A fiercely determined spirit, she was called a benefits specialist, but her main qualification as a trainer, oddly enough, came from her love of animals. As a child she took in stray cats and wounded birds; later, she worked on a farm for rejected horses. "I don't have the ability to walk away from them," she says. Nor would she abandon her trainees, even if it meant breaking the rules. She bought them slacks and shoes, found one woman a free dentist, loaned them cash, arranged and rearranged their day care and contacted her charges daily through messages on shelter bulletin boards. She guaranteed a job to any candidate willing to show up for interviews. "I'm their only chance of survival," she said one afternoon while driving through Washington slums after visiting a trainee. "If I fail them, they may go back on drugs."

At first, there were signs of hope. On the morning of October 16, early in the training, a heavyset woman, Felicia, sat with her fellow trainees, listening intently to the day's speaker, a welfare-mom-turned-Marriott-manager. Felicia was full of questions. "How is it to get up every single day and go to work?" she wondered. Then later: "I want to be a general manager. Is that something I could ever even think of?"

The manager said, "There is nothing you can't be," and that got Felicia fired up. "I really needed to hear that," she told the woman. "I've never gotten in a program and stuck with it. I have dreams and goals also, and when I see you I know I can do it." It sounded like a big step for Felicia, 28, who had been off drugs only a short time and had been in a violent relationship. For the next two weeks, she was the teacher's pet, on time for every session, dominating the discussion and working with Christa on her résumé after class. She talked of the new car, a '97 Nissan, she planned to buy after she got a job. "I see a future for myself," she told me. "Four weeks ago, I didn't see anything."

But, two weeks after Felicia's epiphany, she confided to some classmates that she had left the shelter and returned to her husband. A few days later she found out that a job she was hoping for had been filled. In a mock job interview in class, her confidence cracked and she stopped. "I'm blowing it," she said. Felicia missed the next three days. Finally, Christa reached her at home, and Felicia, sobbing, told Christa she couldn't talk. Concerned for her safety, Christa invited Felicia to sleep at her apartment. The next night, Felicia called Christa at home after 10 p.m. to tell her the police had just left after she and her husband fought. She promised to return to class. "I want to do it," Felicia said. "I'm just feeling really suicidal right now."

Christa said she would overlook the missed time, but the next morning, a Friday, found no Felicia. Returning to her office after class, Christa played a heartbreaking message on her answering machine. "Hello, Christa, this is Felicia. I don't want you to be mad at me and put me out, but I can't come to class and let you all see my face like this." She was crying softly as she spoke. "I don't want you to put me out. That's the last thing I want. It seems I have nothing left. Y'all have to keep me in your prayers. Tell the class I love them all." A few days later, Felicia, her face bruised, came to Christa's office, and they agreed to part ways. Today, Felicia says she's taking a word-processing course. There is no more violence, she says, but things are "still rocky."

Of the sixteen trainees in Christa's group, only twelve survived six weeks to see their names in green icing on the graduation cake that November day. Of those, only seven are working today—and sometimes more because of Marriott's mercy than their own merits. The only other Marriott training group from last fall with a large number of hardship cases had similar results; it's down to six still employed. A success rate of just under 50 percent might not seem all that bad, but the rate is well below the level Marriott requires to justify the expense of training. For the run-of-the-mill welfare recipients who came through the Washington program in 1995, by contrast, Marriott had a retention rate of 78 percent after one year and 71 percent after two years.

Also, even the trainees in Christa's group, though tough by Marriott's standards, didn't come from the very bottom of the rolls. Requiring a certain amount of education and gumption, Christa accepted only twenty-one of the sixty-five who were coerced by their caseworkers to go for interviews. They had to prove strong interpersonal skills, be able to read, pass a drug test (five of the twenty-one failed) and demonstrate eagerness to work—all of which seemed to make them relatively strong candidates for job training and placement.

Yet Tamara, whose two children were in foster care, dropped out after two weeks. She told me she couldn't

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afford the subway fare. When I pointed out that the subway fare was paid for her, she replied, "I didn't like housekeeping anyway." A social worker at the shelter she recently left says Tamara's third child is due in October. The nonchalance of Tamara and some others irked Christa, but she didn't show it, perhaps because she was thinking less of the recalcitrant mothers than of their blameless children. Once, when handing a trainee a subway pass before the trainee started her new job, Christa told her: "This is not just your ticket, it's your kid's ticket." There were easily three dozen young children dependent on their parents' success in the program.

Some participants, inexplicably, disappeared just at the moment success was at hand. Early in the training, Sheron, who at age 21 already had a 5-year-old and two other kids, taped to her door at the shelter a warning written on a torn piece of paper: "Do not knock on my door for any reason. I have to get up real early." Indeed she did, rising at 5 a.m. to bring one of her children to day care and get herself to work, taking three buses and three subways to cover the distance. Sheron, petite and shy with a bomber jacket invariably covering her housekeeper's uniform, struggled throughout the training with child-care troubles. On graduation day, she gave Christa a card. "Thank you for not giving up on me," it said. "I won't let you down."

Within a month, Christa had landed her a Marriott housekeeping job—and within two weeks, Sheron had lost the job after a string of what Marriott calls "no-call no-shows." When I spoke with her later, she said her new apartment had been burglarized, but it was more than that, really. "It's hard to keep doing it, each room, over and over again." The next day, Sheron walked back in to resume her job. "I'm coming back," she told her supervisor. "No," he replied, "you're not."

Christa, who had been keeping a diary of her group's progress, recorded a dejected entry in January after Sheron's dismissal. "Spent last night wondering if there was something I should have done differently," she wrote. "Clearly, some people weren't ready for this." Yet what more could Christa have done? She worked days, nights and weekends, often not reporting her hours for overtime pay. "I'm doing what I need to do to make it happen," she said one afternoon in her basement office, running her hands through her red hair in exasperation. "If I didn't get more involved, I would've lost several more people."

Christa's efforts undoubtedly improved—maybe saved—the lives of the seven who are still working. One of them, Tiny, triumphantly moved her family into a new home in May, after four months on the job. She joined the credit union, opened checking and savings accounts and left welfare. A fellow trainee, Denise, is markedly more confident now that she earns $300 a week as a restaurant hostess. "I feel really good getting up every day," she says. She sent a note to Christa saying, "I can now close the books on the welfare system forever." Christa nursed another student to a job even though the woman's boyfriend had been shot to death in the middle of training; she's still working. "You can't save the whole world," she says. "If one person makes it, it's a whole big different life for that person."

But, as a business proposition, Marriott's experiment with tough welfare cases was a failure. The up-and-down case of Cynthia, who works at the same hotel as Tiny and Denise, shows why. She started full of confidence, taping to her bedroom wall a motivational note titled "Key to Success"; when I sat in on her job interview in December, she delivered a flawless performance despite a nasty cold. But then the scattered Cynthia returned. She missed several days when her teenage son got caught carrying a gun. The lateness and absences continued, and coworkers remarked on how lenient her supervisors had been. Said one supervisor, "If she were a regular new worker, she'd be fired."

Marriott has gone way out of its way to keep Cynthia working. Her supervisors gave her three informal warnings about absenteeism before issuing a formal one, and the company agreed to change her hours because she worried about going home late at night. "It's been bumpy, no question," says Lonnel Moore, who hired Cynthia and knows she may run out of second chances. It's a bottom-line decision: if Cynthia's productivity doesn't justify her wage, Marriott loses money keeping her. And while Lonnel says "it does my heart good" to provide a little private charity, ultimately the special treatment will help neither Marriott's bottom line nor Cynthia's work ethic. Already, she's beginning to believe she's protected by a double standard.

Cynthia isn't the only one of the success stories who turns out to be a source of trouble. One man from the group is prone to outbursts, and a woman in the group just missed a promotion because of her absenteeism, but both get by. More troubling is Charlotte, a member of the group who turned out to be a solid housekeeper but still leaves reason to question Marriott's investment, which presumes long-term retention. Charlotte is getting impatient with her $7.50 an hour. "I work hard, and I should get more money for it," she says. "I'm going Monday to fill out some job applications." Where? Why, at Marriott's arch-rival, "The Grand Hyatt." Even Denise, fiercely loyal to Marriott, is disillusioned. She said in February she expected to save $100 a week, but in five months has put away only $220. And her thirty-two hours at $9 an hour isn't enough to pay the rent. "I feel if I'm not progressing, then I'm in trouble," she says during a break in the Marriott employee cafeteria. "I want to live a normal life like everyone else."

That the group members' problems continue on the job eight months later, despite Christa's efforts, is not surprising, considering where they came from. Poverty experts generally split the welfare caseload into thirds. The top third is easy, those for whom a simple job search will yield lasting employment. A middle third has some barriers to employment, but many of them can be helped by a program like Marriott's. The bottom third is

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where the greatest problem is; though only a few are utterly hopeless, the others in this category, though capable of work, have so many obstacles in their path that getting them to meet even the most minimal of employment standards requires far more effort than most industry supervisors or government social workers would consider worth the trouble. Those in the bottom third usually have a combination of physical or mental problems, troubles with their child's health or behavior, histories of substance abuse or domestic violence and so on. An Urban Institute study found that half of the welfare population needs more assistance than most welfare-to-work programs provide, and a quarter of the caseload is so troubled that even the more extensive programs won't help.

But the distinction between levels of difficulty is a murky one, and what's relevant is not how social scientists view the caseload but how employers do. In this regard, the news of Marriott's failure is even more depressing than it might seem on first sight. Although most, if not all, of the group members were capable of work, their problems—drug abuse, domestic violence, troubled children, health problems, unstable housing and transportation—eventually surfaced to bring them down, despite Christa's intensive coaching. And the only reason more didn't fail, most likely, is because Marriott tried to avoid the hardest of the hard cases.

Clearly, from the private sector's position, a work exemption of only 20 percent of the caseload just won't do it. The question is becoming more pressing because state employment efforts, as they leave the top third of recipients and push for the second third, are already meeting resistance. A June 23 report in *The Hartford Courant*, for example, reported that job placements in 1997 are running at only one-quarter the 1996 rate. "You're hearing from most states that they're realizing it's a lot harder than they anticipated," says LaDonna Pavetti, co-author of the Urban Institute study.

Granted, some states, particularly those with low unemployment, will have less trouble moving hard-core cases: Wisconsin will come out much better than West Virginia. But the 20 percent figure is based on current caseloads, so, as the rolls shrink, states will find themselves with fewer exemptions because the proportion of tough cases rises; in other words, states may become victims of their own success. The Department of Health and Human Services will clarify the regulation this summer, but it's unlikely to change. "That's why we're encouraging them not to do only the easy cases first," says an HHS spokesman. A recession, meanwhile, would make the 20 percent completely inadequate. In a high-unemployment environment even the easiest cases will have trouble finding jobs. The bottom half, much less the bottom third, won't even be worth an effort.

Theoretically, Marriott could run a program that would put hard-core welfare cases to work and keep them working. But the cost, already at $5,000 per participant, would become prohibitive. Regardless, Marriott seems reluctant to do it at any price. Working with the worst cases would require Marriott to run a social-service agency that delivers child care, transportation and housing assistance, plus counseling and daily hand-holding. "It's not something we can do; it's not something we will do; it's not something we should do," Janet Tully says. The private sector, for practical purposes, is out of the game when it comes to the lower half of the caseload.

But government shirks these cases, too: President Clinton insists welfare reform must be a "private-sector show." In truth, the government *can* provide help with such problems as domestic violence, depression, health problems and life-skills training. Yet such efforts require labor-intensive, small-group counseling for some twenty hours a week over two to three years before the participants can even contemplate work. Also, these programs are much more expensive than simply sending out checks—hardly the right recipe when welfare reform is still an excuse for budget cutting in Congress.

A few states have made small efforts in this direction. Michigan's Project Zero, an experimental program on which I've reported, offers extra help with child care, transportation and mentoring to see if the welfare roll can be brought to zero. Oregon and Utah now offer mental-health and substance-abuse assistance through the welfare office. Done right, these ideas could eventually raise the toughest cases to the point where they could succeed in a program like Marriott's. But none of these state efforts, nor any that has yet been contemplated, comes close to what it would take to make the toughest cases viable in the private sector. "It took ten years to get where they were," Janet Tully says of the hard-core cases. "If you think you're going to kiss them off in three months or six months, you're wrong." And while the booming economy has now

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given states unexpected surpluses, it won't be enough to engineer these transitions—particularly since the states are unlikely to use all of the money for welfare reform.

The latest effort by Congress and the Clinton administration to fix the problem at the bottom of the rolls isn't going to do much good, either. The $3 billion in additional block grants Congress now contemplates for assisting states in welfare-to-work transitions would be wasted if states and cities use it, as the legislation intends, for providing the wage subsidies, on-the-job training and job placement that are useful for the middle tier but of no use to the bottom. Though some of the money could be spent on support services, which could help the worst cases, two versions of the legislation now in conference exclude child-care spending. Tax breaks, similarly, offer companies a marginal incentive for marginal welfare cases, but no incentive to work with the tough ones. Says Clifford Johnson, a senior fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "the tax credits and wage incentives and subsidy schemes that are so much in vogue are dangled by the administration, but the message from the business community is if people don't have the skill and work readiness, no amount of incentive is going to get us to hire them."

If neither government nor industry can put the hard cases to work, it's possible the states would simply dump them from the rolls—which, according to at least some evidence, wouldn't be as cruel as it sounds. A study of those dropped from the rolls in Iowa, one of the first states to drop large numbers of recipients, found that, while 47 percent had no job after losing benefits and 49 percent saw their incomes fall, there was "little systematic evidence of extreme deprivation," in part because many people sought and received help from family and friends. Then again, that period without benefits was limited to six months, and the state was dealing only with an "able-bodied" population. Also, the Iowa economy is booming. In a downturn, the options for those dropped from the rolls would be far fewer—many of the toughest cases could wind up hungry. Federal welfare funding is now fixed at $16.5 billion a year, or about 60 percent of the total bill, and won't rise with the caseload. Even well-intentioned states could find, in the depths of a new recession, that they simply can't pay to keep the tough cases on the rolls indefinitely.

Of course, the law would probably change before Americans went hungry. States could get around federal time limits without an increase in spending by transferring the tough cases to programs that are exclusively state-funded while keeping the easy cases in the federal program. States could also loosen rules to make the toughest cases eligible for other programs that don't have time limits. The states could even give recipients public-service jobs in exchange for their benefits: such make-work jobs would certainly be preferable to unconditional checks. But they wouldn't be real jobs in the sense that workers' productivity would be justifying their wages—it would be just another form of welfare. "The rhetoric is we're really going to eliminate dependency," says Rebecca Blank, an economist who directs the University of Chicago/Northwestern University Joint Center for Poverty Research. "But it's not going to happen for the most disadvantaged."

That is unfortunate for people like Charlene, the star of the graduation. A tough woman with bleached orange hair, big hoop earrings and a street-fighter's demeanor, Charlene said she'd been beaten by her boyfriend for years before entering a battered-women's shelter. She was doubtful of her chances from the start. "I've been through so many programs," she said one afternoon while cleaning hotel rooms. In late October, when the class members were compiling "Value of Me" lists, a confidence builder, she burst into tears. "I'm a failure because I'm afraid to go back and face this guy," she told the group.

Charlene missed the next couple of days, then returned with some shocking news. Her violent boyfriend from New York had tracked her down at the shelter. The street fighter was quiet through that day's lesson; four days later, Charlene was openly sobbing in class. Looking through the workbooks after class, Christa found Charlene had written her a note: "It was nice knowing you. I'll see you some other time in life." Another page in the book said, simply, "I'm ugly."

Christa resolved to make Charlene her priority, and saw her through to graduation day. But, to Christa's amazement, Charlene's abuser was in the audience. Things were patched up, Charlene said. In December, Christa arranged a job interview for Charlene at a Marriott in Bethesda, Maryland; afterward, Charlene called excitedly from the subway station to say she expected to be hired, and she was. But it didn't last. In January, she stopped going to work, giving no explanation or warning and leaving baffled supervisors to complain to Christa. Charlene said later that her daughter had chicken pox.

After Charlene walked off the job, Christa still persisted and, in March, found her a new job at a Marriott in Virginia. Charlene didn't show; she called to say her daughter's babysitter couldn't make it. The hotel gave her a second chance, a week later. This time Charlene worked the day, only to announce to her new boss that she could only work weekends. She did some part-time work during the week, she explained. "See you next Saturday," she told her stunned boss. He told her not to bother.

"I went way past the line for her," a sadder but wiser Christa wrote in the diary. Still, Christa doesn't regret the effort, and she hopes Marriott—or somebody else—will spend the extra money to rescue people like Charlene. "If you're going to reach this population, you need a lot more involvement," she said. "But you need to do it. If they sell out on this, it'll go the way of a million other programs." She's right, of course. But try telling that to the accountants. •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

Our bodies, our clones

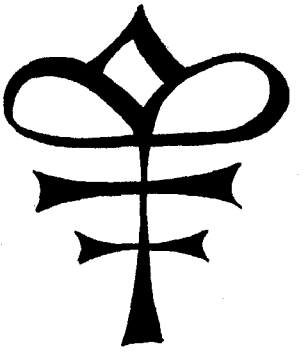
When last we left Dolly, the cunning cloned ewe, she was standing alone, or beside herself, as the case may be. But cloned company is bustin' out all over, even as the presidential commission ponders its implications. There are now cloned calves in Wisconsin, and cloned rodents are running around various labs worldwide.

The even more frightening story, however, may lie in the fertile field of infertility science—that is, the world of human reproductive technology. Many procedures once considered radical are now routine. These include in vitro fertilization, embryo flushing, surrogate embryo transfer and sex preselection. Now comes Dr. Mark Sauer, described by *The New York Times* as an infertility expert at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, who "dreams of offering his patients a type of cloning some day."

According to the *Times*, it would work like this. You take a two- or three-day-old human embryo and use its cells—there are only about eight at this stage—to grow identical embryos. The next step is to implant some of these embryos in a woman's uterus in the hopes that one or more may grow into babies and to freeze the extras. Because initial attempts at impregnation may fail, you would have spare embryos in cold storage as a kind of failsafe for future attempts. Even if the woman successfully carries the initial implants to term, she might want more babies. The upshot, of course, is that a woman could wind up with "identical twins, triplets, or even quadruplets, possibly born years apart." And why would anyone want this? Sauer has a pragmatic answer: otherwise there "might be no babies at all" for the infertile women who have come to him for expensive, high-tech treatment.

To be sure, the premise of this procedure isn't as obviously morally repugnant as a scenario that emerged in the immediate aftermath of Dolly: cloning a dying child so that parents might replace him and forestall their grief. This image borders on an obscenity, which is why cloning enthusiasts are so enthralled with this latest embryo cloning scenario. By contrast, the new debate will rage on more sanitized territory, around whether this is cloning at all. Sauer and other proponents say that, because cloning is a "politically dirty word," they hope that their proposed method of crypto-cloning may slip off the radar screen. Besides, they argue, it's much better for the women involved: you don't have to give women lots of drugs, Sauer notes, to "force their ovaries to pump out multiple eggs so that they could fertilize them and create as many embryos as possible."

You can be sure that this "attractive" method of replicating embryos will generate unattractive political demands. A group will spring up proclaiming "embryo duplication rights," just as an outfit emerged instantly after Dolly was announced arguing that to clone oneself was a fundamental right. Several of the infertility specialists cited in the *Times* piece—all male doctors, interestingly enough—spoke of the desperate pleading of women, of "the misery my patients are living through." But surely a good bit of that misery comes from raising expectations (with procedures like in vitro), only to find, time and again, that the miracle of modern medicine has turned into an invasive, expensive, heartrending dud.



Whatever happened to accepting embodied limits with grace? There are many ways to enact what the late Erik Erikson called "generative" projects and lives. Biological parenthood is one but not the only one. Many of the women we consider great from history—I think here of one of my own heroes, Jane Addams of Hull-House—were not mothers, although they did an extraordinary amount of mothering. Either through necessity or choice, they devoted their lives to civic or religious projects that located them over the years in a world of relationships with children who were not their own. These relationships involved loving concern, care, friendship, nurture, protection, discipline, pride, disappointment—all the complex virtues, habits and emotions called forth by biological parenting.

And there is adoption, notwithstanding the frustrations many encounter and the recent fear instilled by such outrageous cases in which children were wrenched from the only family they ever knew in order to be returned to a biological parent who has discovered belatedly the overwhelming need to be a father or a mother. How odd that biology now trumps nearly all other claims and desires. In several popular books such as Kristin Luker's *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy*, adoption is surrounded with a faintly sinister odor and treated as an activity not all that different from baby selling.

These trends are undoubtedly linked, and they raise a host of questions. For instance, how does one account for the fact that the resurgence of feminism over the past thirty years emerged in tandem with the enhanced pressures on women to reproduce biologically (pressures women frequently helped place upon themselves)? And why are these developments surrounded by such a desperate aura and a sense of failure—including the failure of many marriages that cannot survive the tumult of infertility and high-tech medicine's intrusion into a couple's intimate lives? One possible explanation is our obsession, at the end of the twentieth century, with identity: who we are. Sometimes this takes the form of identity politics in which one's own identity gets submerged into that of a group, likely a group defined in biological or quasi-biological terms on grounds of sex, race or ethnicity. That's problematic enough as a basis for politics, to say the least. But we've further compounded the biological urgencies, upping the ante to bear one's "own" child as a measure of the success or failure of the self.

I do not want to downplay how heartbreaking it is for many couples who want to have a baby and cannot. But, again, there are many ways to parent and many babies desperate for loving families. Rather than expand our sense of gracious acceptance of those who may not be our direct biological offspring, which means accepting our own limits but realizing that these open up other possibilities, we rail against cruel fate and reckon ourselves worthless persons if we fail biologically. Perhaps with so much up for grabs, in light of the incessant drumbeat to be all we can be, to achieve, to produce, to succeed, to define our own projects, to be the sole creators of our own destinies, we have fallen back on the bedrock of biology. When all that is solid is melting into air, maybe biology seems the last redoubt of solidity, of identity. But, of course, this is chimerical. In demanding of our bodies what they sometimes cannot give, our world grows smaller, our focus more singular if not obsessive, and identity itself is called into question: our own and that of our future, identical offspring.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Intimacies

When Queen Victoria died in 1901 and her body was placed in its coffin, her personal physician followed some directions that she had left. A picture of a man and a lock of his hair were placed in Victoria's hand, then covered with flowers. The man was not Prince Albert.

It was John Brown, a Scottish peasant particularly good with horses, who had been a servant of Albert and Victoria when they were in Scotland. After Albert died, in 1861, Victoria went into a globally noted depression. For several years she refused to appear in public and did only as much governmental business as was absolutely essential. She had married at 20, had been happily married for twenty-one years during which she bore nine children, and was shattered by Albert's death. So complete was her withdrawal that it caused difficulties in Parliament and even fueled a small republican movement in the country.

One of her entourage thought it might help the queen if she did some riding as she used to do, so he summoned John Brown from Scotland to Osborne, on the Isle of Wight, along with the queen's favorite pony. After some initial resistance, Victoria rode, and Brown attended her. She became markedly fond of the gruff, intensely loyal but highly informal Brown. He and she became, figuratively, inseparable. Her spirits lifted; she returned to public life. Brown remained at her side so constantly that the waggish press dubbed her "Mrs. Brown."

This is the subject of **Mrs. Brown** (Miramax). The fluent screenplay by Jeremy Brock and the trim direction by John Madden do a great deal to give the film liveliness and pulse, rather than provide us with a series of history-book illustrations. The big worry in making a film of this sort is "Masterpiece Theater," the label that is stuck so quickly on historical films, particularly English ones. All the grandeur implicit in this story is the very stuff of "Masterpiece Theater," the sense that the film was made to give two hours of royal life to those of us who happen to be bank tellers and dental assistants in Newark. But here the writer and director strive to catch the odd personal complexities, especially the sexual ones, in the relationship between the widowed queen and the unmarried, strong-willed, kilted gillie.

Did they sleep together? Victoria's journals disclose that she was of a much hotter temperament than her public persona allowed. Says Adrienne Munich in *Queen Victoria's Secrets*:

> Whether Victoria did or did not enjoy actual carnal relations with John Brown, sexual currents galvanized her appreciation of him. Whatever their points of actual physical contact—and Brown was observed ordering the queen to change her dress and attaching Her Majesty's shawl pin, scolding her as "wummun" to hold still—no one disagrees that Victoria's relationship with John Brown was intimate, intense, and sentimental.... Despite evidence of profound attachment, their further intimacies remain surmise.

To which many of us might add, "Shucks."

It's a now-familiar paradox of Victorian history, in all its aspects, that, despite the rigid decorum—chair legs *were* modestly covered with ruffles—there were all sorts of wildness underneath. What crowns this paradox is the fact that Victoria herself, the wellspring of propriety, was bending the rules at least a little. Not secretly, either. The press continually toyed with the subject until Brown's death, in 1883.

The film's authority rests first and finally on the two actors in the leading roles. They are utterly reassuring. Billy Connolly is best known in Britain as a comic, but here he has strength and anger and tenderness. (Some years ago there was talk of filming this story with Sean Connery, but the then sacrosanctity of the royal family deterred the project. Times have changed.) As Victoria, the excellent Judi Dench is regal and real throughout. She convinces easily as one of the most important people in the world and as a moody, worrying, tender woman.

Antony Sher plays Disraeli in *Mrs. Brown* and is so oleaginously crafty that we wonder how he ever succeeded in politics. His own party would have hooted at his hamminess.

Sher is also in **Alive and Kicking** (First Look), where he plays a modern London therapist, gay, who is tremendously attracted to a dancer (Jason Flemyng). Sher pursues Flemyng dog-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Designated Mourner. *Wallace Shawn's exquisite threnody for a disappearing civilization. As in the theater for which it was written, three people face us and talk—arrestingly. Mike Nichols, the central figure, is extraordinary. (Reviewed 3/24/97)* **La Promesse.** *Belgian. Subtly tremendous. A working-class teenager gets his first view of ethical depths through the behavior of an African woman amidst the foreign workers. (5/26/97)* **Ulee's Gold.** *Peter Fonda is grizzled and secure as a north Florida beekeeper trying to protect his family. Once again Victor Nunez, the cinema bard of that area, sings a generally quiet ode. (7/7/97)* **Waco: The Rules of Engagement.** *A 165-minute documentary about the fate of the Branch Davidians. Sobering. Shocking. Haunting. (7/14 & 21/97)*—**SK**

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gedly (though the latter is HIV positive), and the film is the weather map of their relationship.

The screenplay by Martin Sherman, the American who wrote *Bent*, almost explicitly shuns plot novelty in its concentration on character and atmosphere—the London dance world. The two men become passionate lovers without being in love, and they go through tempests and reconciliations until the conclusion, when the dancer's HIV begins to worsen. There's a phony Movieland device that enables the stricken dancer to perform in a premiere, but mostly the film is about the hazards for two intelligent men of being alive and caring.

Sherman quite clearly knows his people—the principals and others—and supplies some springy dialogue. The director, Nancy Meckler, another American, did exceptionally fine work in the wretchedly underappreciated *Sister My Sister*, but here she has less chance for stylization. She concentrates understandingly on the abrasions and emollients of ego.

Flemyng, a tall man of striking good looks, shows plenty of vivifying talent. (And he is supple in the modern dance that we see.) He has humor and depth and a kind of impatience, as if he wants to give each scene all possible truth but is eager to get on to the next one.

Sher wants you to know that he is acting. He is like a younger Simon Callow, knowingly unbeautiful and attempting to compensate for it with attack, with precise enunciation, with different sheets of emotion lowered suddenly over his face like colored gels before a lamp. He's much more taking here than as Disraeli; still, we are asked again for tolerance—of a species of meta-acting. In order to believe Sher, we have to believe that the character he is playing is in some degree an actor. Sher overstrains our belief as Disraeli, but strains it just enough as the therapist.

A Note. In March 1934, when I was a drama student in New York, I went to see Sidney Howard's play *Yellow Jack*. Afterward I went backstage to meet a friend in the cast, an old actor, and we went to a bar next to the theater. Soon two younger members of the cast came in, one of whom was quite tall, and my friend introduced us. The taller man was James Stewart. We all chatted for a while, then I moved to leave. Stewart reached out his long arm; and we shook hands and wished each other luck. •

Sinn Feign

By R. F. Foster

Before the Dawn: An Autobiography by Gerry Adams

(William Morrow, 332 pp., $25)

General elections in the Republic of Ireland are long, drawn-out affairs, cheerful, gossipy, cliff-hanging. The first weekend of June was no exception. Amid the general bonhomie, however, a jarring note was struck by the visiting presence of Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, down from Northern Ireland to campaign for his party's candidates in a few carefully targeted constituencies. Their vote had recently increased in the Northern Ireland elections, to around 17 percent, with Adams himself recapturing a seat from the moderate-nationalist Social Democratic Labour Party; and in the Republic's subsequent election it moved from infinitesimal to tiny but growing, gaining them one seat in the Dail, the Irish parliament in Dublin. Moving around the desolate working-class areas of inner Dublin (the other side of the smile on the face of the Celtic Tiger), Adams was mobbed by the young and the disadvantaged. His general demeanor, memorably described by an Irish journalist as "vulpine sanctimoniousness," faltered with his evident shock at social conditions so much worse than anything in his own heavily subsidized West Belfast. He was clearly off his turf, but just as clearly determined on invasion.

The elections of last spring certainly marked a new stage in Gerry Adams's long march to constitutional politics through peace process talk, via what are euphemistically called "community politics." And Sinn Fein's recent orchestration of the nationalist resistance to the annual marches of the Protestant Orange Order helped to establish Adams further. Opinion in the Republic, where Adams is not much liked, is understandably edgy. Surrounded by his handlers, he is hard to touch, harder to argue with: debate is encased within an impenetrable carapace of hard party line. Much has been written about him, on both sides of the Atlantic, since he emerged as a broker of "peace" with the long-promised and long-postponed ceasefire, which lasted for nearly eighteen months from August 31, 1994. And yet a haze still hangs over the origins of his long march: Where is Adams coming from?

His autobiography might seem as good a place to start as any. But the book brings its own surprises. For one thing, it takes 263 pages to reach the year 1978, and events since 1978 are compressed into a mere sixty-two pages, many of them dealing with the hunger strikes by Republican prisoners demanding "political status" in 1981. The book effectively ends there, except for a sentimental and unrealistic epilogue about Adams's hopes for peace now: "extraordinary collective experience ... ritual condemnations of the IRA ... continuing injustice suffered by nationalists in the occupied northeastern counties ... discovering common ground ... uniting the whole people of Ireland ... minimalist approach of London ... allegiance and agreement of all sections of our people." The conclusion flees for refuge to the mandatory quotation from Seamus Heaney.

This shift enables Adams to avoid a significant subject, that is, the tension between his arguments as president of a peace-seeking Sinn Fein and the record of contemporaneous IRA activity. Those who have wondered whether this dissonance was evidence of a connected policy, or of a suppressed power struggle within the Republican movement, will have to go on wondering. But this is not really surprising, since Adams's book is also completely silent on what his relationship with the IRA was, or is.

What do we have instead? He was born in 1948 into a Republican family in Belfast and was much involved with the movement on his mother's and his father's side—yet he tells us that somehow the movement passed him by until the politicization of the 1960s. Instead, an idyll of working-class Belfast youth is recalled, which he has already mined for sentimental little books of sketches and stories with such titles as "Falls Memories" and "The Street." The late 1960s brought ostensible political activity, a nascent civil rights organization, rapid politicization and aggressive public demonstrations in the form of marches. These sparked a draconian reaction from local police and

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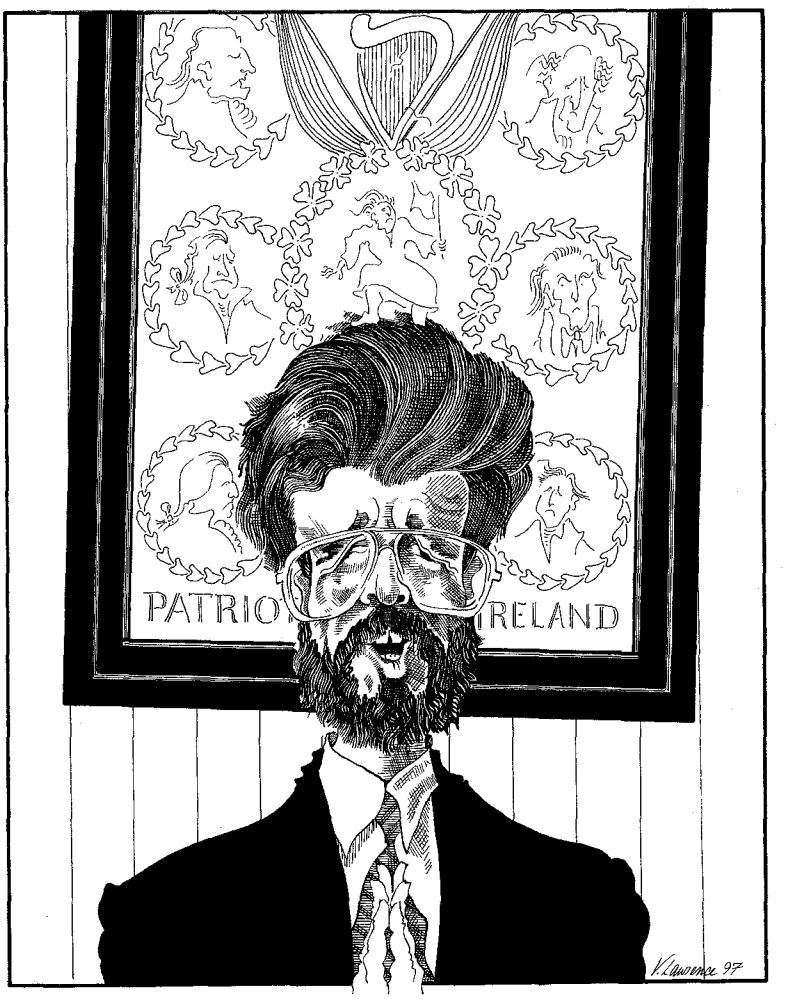
Orange bigots. When public order was at the point of collapse and intercommunal conflict exploded, the British government sent troops in to keep the peace. At best insensitive and at worst culpably partial, their advent allowed the situation to be presented as the latest installment in an immemorial Irish-versus-British struggle. In the process, the IRA was reborn as a community defense movement.

Adams leaves school prematurely (for unexplained reasons), becomes a community "activist," is imprisoned in the early 1970s (again for no good reason, at least as given here), is mysteriously sprung from jail to be part of the IRA delegation negotiating with the British government in 1972, returns to community action, is subsequently rearrested—until, around the time of the hunger strikes by IRA prisoners demanding the status of political prisoners in 1981, he discovers the political path and persuades like-minded people to work through the ballot box as well as through "armed struggle." In his frantically elided final pages, Adams emerges as the would-be Mandela of Ireland, the apostle of peace that the world press has come to know—though this is conveyed in woolly generalities, with barely a mention of the compromise strategy, hammered out by Adams with John Hume, that preceded the "peace process" of the early 1990s.



GERRY ADAMS BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In these pages, in fact, the subject of the autobiography remains oddly absent. This is not an expression of humility or self-effacement (the author provides many photographs of himself); it is owed, rather, to the book's structure of evasion and elision, even in straightforward personal matters. The account of courtship and marriage is oddly perfunctory and uneven. His wife, Colette, is praised for her good Republican qualities, but while his father-in-law "gave us his blessing" he was "too upset to attend the wedding," and we are not told why. Adams himself is presented as a reluctant leader, hating publicity. Judging by this account, his most passionate commitment is to the narrow world of West Belfast, a self-justifying and tightly knit community later replicated in the Republican wing of internment prison.

So perhaps it is time to return to some of the questions left open by this insubstantial account. It is tempting, for instance, to map this story against the version of the early 1960s in Northern Ireland that has been presented in countless scholarly and historical analyses: a political landscape in which seismic shifts began to register themselves through a vastly increased Labour vote, the decline of the old IRA and the evident desire of a growing Catholic middle class to engage with the institutions of the State instead of boycotting them. (Adams's assertion that sectarianism was becoming more and more evident through the mid- to late-1960s flies in the face of all the evidence.) Against this background, from 1963, a new prime minister of Northern Ireland, Terence O'Neill, arranged meetings with his counterpart in the Republic, adopted the language of modernization and attempted to confront the areas of Ulster life where discrimination was most manifest—too ineptly, as it turned out. He was outflanked by a backlash from less adaptable elements in his Unionist party, who saw any such traffickings as endangering the link with Britain. Those agitating for civil rights became accordingly impatient, and liberal Unionists disillusioned: the movement was soon commandeered by the Young Turks of the next nationalist generation.

Or so it seems to scholars. But this is not the landscape mapped by Adams, who is determined to see things purely in the perspective framed by his mother's back window: the final explosion of an oppressed people against dictators and collaborators. This is one view, certainly; but even accepting it, there is less information than might be expected. What one wants to hear more about from Adams is the life of an "activist" in the 1960s and 1970s. The "activism" seems to revolve around summer camps, drilling, living on the run, being known to the police and sometimes taking part in "tribunals" held, for safety's sake, across the border in the Republic. Moreover, Adams comes from a background steeped in Republicanism, with many relatives (including his father) serving prison terms—yet the name "IRA" is rarely brought in. He claims that at the age of 12 he "barely comprehended what the border was," and was innocent of sectarian bigotry. Later, when he learns Irish history, it is a revelation.

All this seems rather unlikely for someone who attended a Christian Brothers school and inhabited a home in which traditions of nationalist struggle were imbibed with every cup of strong tea. In fact, the whole thing seems unnecessarily coy, given that reputable historians of the Troubles have already detailed Adams's progress through the ranks of the IRA from the age of 17. Mark Urban, Patrick Bishop, Eamon Mallie, J. Bowyer Bell and others have specifically stated that he moved from commanding the Ballymurphy detachment of the IRA to being in charge of the Belfast Brigade in 1971, emerging as commanding officer of IRA operations in 1979 and retaining his seat on the Army Council. If true, this would explain why he was plucked from jail in 1972 to negotiate with William Whitelaw,

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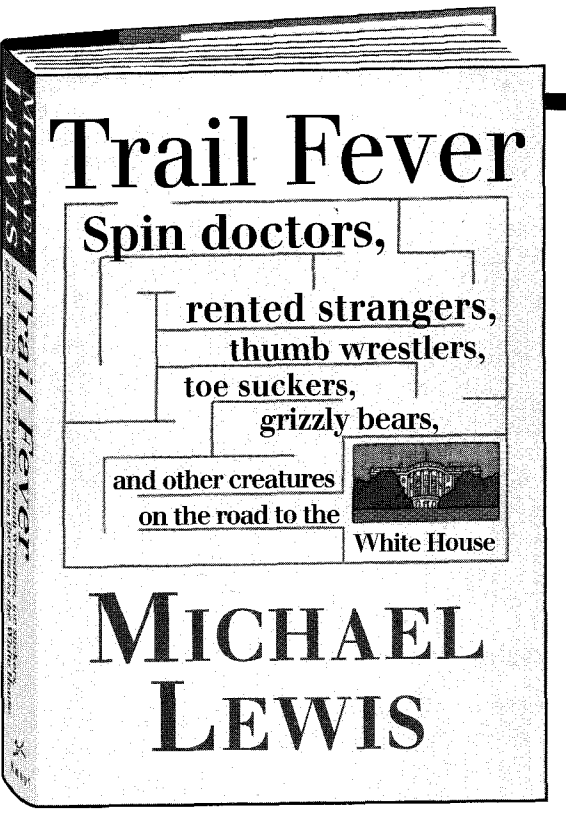
then Britain's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, though different stories circulate about who insisted upon it. As it stands, however, reading Adams's account of his own political history is rather like reading a biography of Patton that leaves out the Army.

In his memoir, Adams prefers to concentrate upon activities such as housing action committees, radicalization through the squatting movement of the 1960s and a background in People's Democracy and the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (the former a '60s radical student-activist movement, the latter a moderate grouping of liberals spanning the political and religious spectrum). This is understandable, since it chimes more tunefully with his current image; but it will surprise many who were there at the time. (His own feelings are sometimes given away, as where he writes contemptuously that NICRA "yawned itself into existence.") Even when the logic of events forces him to remark that he was on terms with "the Belfast leadership" of the IRA, and even "found himself witness to" a meeting between official IRA members and the breakaway Provisionals, his own importance in dictating the terms of that break (alleged in several scholarly sources) is left silent.

Perhaps here, too, is a clue to the sudden vagueness that descends after 1978. According to Mark Urban's *Big Boys' Rules: The Secret Struggle Against the IRA* (1992), it was in 1979 that Adams replaced Martin McGuinness as chief of staff of the IRA Army Council. But last May, McGuinness, too, was returned as a Sinn Fein member of Parliament; and so IRA operations against civilians during the late 1970s and early 1980s, such as the firebombing of the La Mon Hotel by the Ballymurphy brigade (twelve people burned to death), or the atrocities at the Droppin' Well pub (sixteen people killed and sixty-six injured) and at Harrods (eight killed), are best left aside. McGuinness's and Adams's entries in the latest register of Westminster Members of Parliament are laconic in the extreme: their "previous careers" are simply "Chief Negotiator of Sinn Fein" (McGuinness) and "Member, Northern Ireland Assembly, 1981" (Adams). It would probably be unrealistic to expect anything more.

The other gaping hole in Adams's book concerns the 83 percent of Northern Ireland's population who do not vote for Sinn Fein: the Unionists and the moderate nationalists. Apart from a reference in the introduction to a "small privileged sector" of the population, the first Protestants in Adams's book are encountered on page 140. Unionism, as



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a political element, does not look in until page 318. *Before the Dawn* gives the impression of a Catholic nationalist province draconically kept in the sway of a distant empire, awaiting liberation at the hands of its untrustworthy and corrupted mother country to the south. Thus, Adams can describe the IRA as an "organic system of local democracy." This may well be how Adams sees it, but in a state two-thirds Unionist and Protestant, it is hardly the full picture. Life would be much simpler if it were.

But this is a book that deals with that simple picture, from a man who has—most of his career—advocated a "solution" so simple that, if it were viable, the problem which it purports to address would not exist in the first place. Every argument in Adams's book tends to this end, at the expense of any nuance or ambiguity. The political nature of Unionism is seen (against all the evidence) not only as immutable, but also as completely monolithic. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (Northern Ireland's police force), which is currently being threatened and even murdered by Protestant extremists for attempting impartial policing, is seen as an unchanging entity, indistinguishable from the long-disbanded and entirely Protestant B-Special force: a paramilitary volunteer outfit set up in the 1920s and utterly discredited by the 1970s.

Most breathtakingly, there is absolutely no discussion of the evolving attitude of British governments from the mid-1960s up to the dramatic Hillsborough Accord of 1985 and the subsequent Downing Street declaration of 1993. Those statements did not only solidify the joint nature of Dublin's and London's approach to the Ulster morass, and accordingly distanced the Republic from the IRA desideratum; they also put on a public record something that mandarins had known for decades: that the British had no long-term strategic or political aim to remain in Northern Ireland for a moment longer than they had to stay there. The recent predicament of the Secretary of State in the new Labour government—obviously trying to prevent the Orange marches past Catholic areas this summer and helplessly unable to do so—makes at least one thing clear: the British are not the problem. Adams's memoir, however, relies upon the demonization of a monolithic and immutable enemy.

Few would unequivocally defend the record of the British Army in Northern Ireland, and there is plenty of evidence to convict them of abuses of power. But can Gerry Adams really believe that the shooting of civilians by panicky and trigger-happy British paratroopers during the Bloody Sunday demonstrations in 1972 was "a deliberate military operation ... planned in advance at the highest political ... level"? No evidence is given for this assertion. It certainly flies in the face of previous analyses of that horror; and, in terms of British government strategy, such an atrocity makes no sense at all. As far as Adams is concerned, however, evidence is irrelevant. Similarly, a classic sectarian standoff, such as that provoked by the Provisional IRA at the Lenadoon housing estate in 1972, may have been "engineered" by the British government (how?), and the Maguire children, killed by a runaway car during an IRA chase, may have been victims of "British army bullets." That tragedy was the beginning of the "Peace People" movement, described by Adams elsewhere as a government front. And so this conspiracy theory, like all conspiracy theories, remains self-fulfilling.

Adams's formation, after all, owes much to the simplicities of Maoist conspiracy theory of the '60s; but he adhered to the theory longer than most. His speech at Bodenstown in June 1979, for example, is not quoted in his autobiography, but it deserves to be remembered:

> We stand opposed to all forms and manifestations of imperialism and capitalism. We stand for an Ireland free, united socialist and gaelic.... Our movement needs constructive and thoughtful self-criticism. We also require links with those oppressed by economic and social pressures. Today's circumstances and our objectives dictate the need for building an agitational struggle in the twenty-six counties, an economic resistance movement, linking up Republicans with other sections of the working class. It needs to be done now because to date our most glaring weakness lies in our failure to develop revolutionary politics and to build an alternative to so-called constitutional politics.

If this was the agenda for the 1980s, it showed an impressively skewed reading of where Ireland was actually going. The obvious reaction must be that Adams has abandoned these "revolutionary" simplicities. Yet much of his book leads one to think otherwise. The bird's-eye view of Irish history retailed early in the narrative contrives to leave out completely the constitutional nationalist tradition of O'Connell, Butt, Parnell and Redmond: a continuity of Irish parliamentary leaders from the 1830s to World War I, representing the great majority of the island, who worked for repealing the Union with Britain and restoring an Irish parliament, while stressing the importance of reconciling Protestant Ireland to this ideal.

In contemporary politics, Adams also ignores the argument of the moderate nationalist SDLP that the position of Catholic nationalists in the North is not such as to justify violence. In this book, there is no room for any kind of move toward pluralism or inclusivity until the epilogue, when the notion of "democratic dialogue" suddenly raises its pretty head. And who is this "democratic dialogue" to be with? The SDLP and the Dublin government. Unionists, as usual, go unmentioned; the hard part is passed over in silence. In this, Adams is in a long tradition of Irish nationalist argument. He implicitly reaffirms the myopia which causes the reader of this book time and again to despair of any possible way forward. Perhaps his refusal, apart from a couple of sentences in the epilogue, to discuss the Hume-Adams initiative of 1993 is the most ominous sign of all. When the leader of moderate nationalism in Northern Ireland, a man with a long record of dedicated opposition to IRA methods, produced joint proposals with Adams as a basis for negotiations, a shaft of realism seemed to have struck into the self-justifying obscurity of the hard-line Republican mind. Adams gained a public credence by association with Hume's political probity, but there is little evidence here that his own views were influenced by those of the SDLP, who have constituted, to the IRA, a part of the traditional enemy.

Again, one returns to the techniques of evasion. The strategy of ending his narrative—to all intents and purposes—in 1981 preempts any real discussion not only of the recent (and exploded) ceasefire, but also of civilian atrocities such as the Warrington bombing, or Adams's refusal to condemn (in October 1993) Thomas Begley, who as an IRA operative murdered eleven men, women and children with a bomb in a fish-and-chips shop. (A *Protestant* fish-and-chips shop.) Adams not only refused to decry the event in any meaningful way, he also acted as a pallbearer at Begley's funeral. And when a knotty problem does come up, such as the rationale of violence in the context of present-day Northern Ireland, Adams resorts to an economical device: recycling his own earlier publications. Thus the tone shifts from awkward first-person narrative to distinctly mushy fiction. He actually reprints a short story of his own, dealing with the thoughts of a sniper as he kills a British soldier. The moral point is unmistakable: the soldier had no right to be there, and the "Volunteer" was only doing his noble duty.

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Adams's *Selected Writings*, which appeared in 1994 to coincide with his controversial American tour. Much of it reflects the basic values of his Bodenstown speech. ("Foreign investors" are listed among the national enemies who threaten the solidarity of the Republican community, which should make some well-meaning American businesspeople pause for thought.) But Adams also writes short stories, and the construction of those pieces, which he has published steadily since his prison days, deserves attention. They are moral tales, relying on black-and-white values and a dénouement in the last paragraph. The sentimentality is ruthless. So, too, is the reveling in memories of an idyllic childhood before "violence" spoiled it all. "The mass of the Irish people" are prevented from admittance into Utopia by the British government's refusal to allow "a united Republican working class" to develop.

Incidents from Adams's memoir are foreshadowed in his stories, notably the unintentionally hilarious Hardy Boys tale of Gerry's dog. This pampered creature, hand-reared on delicacies from the family table and lovingly nursed by the hero, is stolen by British soldiers, who have already shot the family's previous pet under circumstances that are not divulged. (Was he trying to escape?) The dog reappears, however, at the end of a soldier's leash, when the hero is incarcerated in prison. It has been retrained as an army operative! Naturally it recognizes its proper master, and it is dragged brutally away. The recurrence of the story is interesting: Is it a metaphor for collaborationism? And which came first, the fiction or the memoir? But that is the wrong question. For *Before the Dawn* is really the novel for which the short stories prepared us.

What they share is a firmly unrealistic nostalgia. Kneecapping, arms deals with Libya, racketeering, kangaroo courts, the targeting of civilians whose connection with "Loyalist paramilitaries" is asserted but never proved, bombs in shopping centers, the boycotting of Protestant businesses, the effective ethnic cleansing of Protestant communities from rural areas: none of this features in the fiction or the autobiography. Yet both reiterate their author's surprise at what has been done to the city he loves so well. He is astonished at the desecration of the old working-class areas of Belfast: "I feel sick at the way in which it has been turned upside down and I regret that people throughout the course of this war have suffered so much in so many different ways." SDLP leaders such as John Hume, Gerry Fitt and Paddy Devlin, victims of IRA attacks on their homes and families, may read those words with a wry smile; and Unionists will find it hard to raise a smile in the first place.

It might be said—or at least hoped—that Adams is a man trying to learn a new language. Yet echoes from the old come awkwardly through in statements such as the one quoted in the *Irish News* on February 13, when Republican vigilantes were much in the news for a series of brutal attacks using nail-studded baseball bats. "I'm against punishment beatings," Adams told the paper. "I've made that clear. I do think communities have a right to defend themselves, but it must be very measured and it must be sustainable and inclusive." Whatever this means, it is not completely reassuring. Last month two policemen on their rounds in Lurgan were shot dead through the back by the IRA. This threatened the possibility of "dialogue" and created a wave of revulsion in Ireland, north and south; the faces of the victims' children, traumatized and uncomprehending, became a terrible emblem of collective grief. Yet throughout, as the Taoiseach (Premier) of the Republic remarked, Gerry Adams "ransacked the dictionary" to avoid condemning the murders.

On his world tours, Adams achieves a smoother synthesis. The rhetoric of peace enables him to reap the rewards of glamorized Republicanism without revealing that he has ever—so to speak—inhaled. Journalists are rarely given the opportunity to ask him awkward questions, which is why it was a mistake (if an understandable one) for the Republic to ban Sinn Fein spokespeople from their airwaves for so long, and why it is a mistake for the British Parliament in London to deny access to Adams and McGuinness until they take the Oath of Allegiance to the Queen. Too often Adams has been able to absent himself from accountability. (The Warrington bomb was one such occasion.) If his writings demonstrate anything, however, it is the need for his solipsistic frame of reference to be challenged.

This solipsism enables him to identify convenient enemies in his rhetoric, and they are not, primarily, the Unionists with whom he has to share the place where he lives. The Unionists, again, he simply eliminates from the account. From time to time he draws modish but unsound parallels with South Africa, but he ignores a closer and more sinister parallel. Northern Ireland over the last quarter of a century of communal conflict has anticipated—on both sides—the collision of fundamentalist religion, exclusivist nationalism, resegregation

Black Men Speaking

Edited by Charles Johnson and John McCluskey, Jr.

"A day does not pass when I do not brood on the negative social profile and bad PR that seem to envelop contemporary images of black males in America. As an artist and a father, I am filled with urgency and more than a little anger because I know my own son, now approaching his twenty-first birthday, and my fourteen-year-old daughter must negotiate their way through an uncivil public space soured by the steady bombardment of media images that portray black people in the worst imaginable ways—as welfare cheats, criminals, incompetent parents, ex-cons, poor students, crack heads, as an affirmative-action liability in the workplace, and, to put this bluntly, as the corrupting worm coiled inside the American apple."
—Charles Johnson, from his essay "The Second Front"

Initially conceived of as an exploration of "the plight of the black male in the United States," *Black Men Speaking* is that and more. It gives expression to a range of issues—cultural, economic, psychological, religious, and personal—as seen by a remarkable group of black men—novelists, a well-known artist, a Pulitzer Prize–winning poet, a doctor, an editor, an academic, a famous musician, and a group of ordinary citizens from Harlem. Powerful voices give us powerful images and powerful messages.

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and terrorism so horribly demonstrated in Bosnia.

And though the death-or-glory, cowboys-and-Indians passages of Adams's memoir present the forces of the British state as the villains of the piece, the story between the lines is rather different. One reads there his visceral dislike of the actual Republic of Ireland, which is so unaccountably unlike the virtual-reality green-and-Gaelic model that he has been educated to believe it should be. In the real republic, its noble traditions of uncomplicated history have been taken over by "anti-nationalist" intellectuals, its business interests are happily profiting from the Euroboom, its political establishment is uninterested in the struggle of the Northern ghettos, its ministers and civil servants are hobnobbing with their opposite numbers in the Evil Empire to the east. (Significantly, Adams admits that the old "Official" IRA's political wing gained support in the south by giving up Republicanism and reconstructing itself as the "Worker's Party," but he cannot accept the reasons why this was so.)

The other implicit enemy is represented by what Adams contemptuously refers to as the "Catholic middle classes" of Northern Ireland. Hence his ignoring of the SDLP; hence his single reference to the Sunningdale power-sharing experiment of 1974, when SDLP and Unionists, after a conference arranged by Dublin and London, formed a short-lived joint government of Northern Ireland, generally accepted as one of the few bright spots in the statelet's murky recent history; hence his lack of regret at the sectarianizing of Derry politics, and the increasing apartness of the religious demography of the region; hence his denunciation (at the time) of the Hillsborough Agreement, which was seen as a victory for Hume and the SDLP and brought about a dramatic slump in the Sinn Fein vote in Northern Ireland in 1986. The apparent pan-nationalist front that emerged at the time of the 1994 ceasefire does not disguise this. If anything is now clear (and even some Sinn Fein pronouncements after the ceasefire in 1994 admitted as much), it is the fact that the traditional aim of "the Republican movement" is unwinnable.

The border will not magically disappear. It is branded too deeply not only into the hearts of nearly a million Northern Irish people, but also into the consciousness of a Republic determined to maintain the values of its own stable, homogeneous and politically sophisticated society. And the activities of Gerry Adams and the IRA, paradoxically, have helped to cement this determination, north and south. The murders in Lurgan in June, and the current confrontations between the communities during the marching season, solidify it yet further. On the strength of what he has committed to paper, however, there is little evidence that Adams has revised or adapted his analysis. A 1960s apparatchik to the end, he still believes that a "long war" will bring that hoped-for dawn; and he still defines his enemy as a sadistic colonial power, not a large section of the Irish population.

Meanwhile, Northern Ireland lurches into a summer of riots, demonstrations, brutalities on both sides and the striking of immovable attitudes. Yet those who emerge best from the statelet's sorry history over the last decades are those who were prepared to change their minds, though there are few enough of them. Reading *Before the Dawn*, I thought of another Northern autobiography: *Straight Left*, by Paddy Devlin. It appeared in 1993. Like Adams, Devlin negotiated with the British government in 1972, though he goes unmentioned in Adams's memoir. An IRA internee in the 1940s, he was subsequently a socialist, a trade unionist, a local politician, an organizer of Catholic defense groups in the 1960s, a founding member of the SDLP and a consistent scourge of the Provisional IRA—whose zero-sum game plan he blames for the parlous state of both politics and communal relations within the province. Devlin and his like came to place their faith not in the ruthless nostalgia of utopians but in local cultural initiatives, rebuilding local industry and encouraging integrated education. They expect change to follow slowly in a Northern Ireland that is already very different from the time-warped slough of discrimination in which it was sunk in the early 1960s. Such people inhabit a world far removed from the territory that is complacently reflected in Gerry Adams's writings, but it may have more to do with a United Ireland in the end.

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Levity's Rainbow

BY JAMES WOOD

Mason & Dixon by Thomas Pynchon

(Henry Holt, 773 pp., $27.50)

It is a problem for allegory that, while going about its allegorical business, it draws attention to itself. It is like someone who undresses in front of his window so that he can be seen by his neighbors. Allegory wants us to know that it is being allegorical. It is always saying: watch me, I *mean* something, *I* mean something. In this, it is very different from most great fiction. (It resembles bad fiction.) Why does anyone tolerate it? In literature, we rarely do. It is forgiven its hieroglyphics when it overcomes itself and behaves like great fiction (Kafka, some Dickens); when it elaborates complicated and deep truths (Dante, Kafka again); or when it explodes itself in the hunt for deep truth (Melville). It is tolerated when it is not only a map, but a landscape, too.

Thomas Pynchon is the most allegorical American writer since Melville and, for better or worse, the clear inheritor of Melville's broken estate. But his novels behave like allegories that refuse to allegorize. They pile up meanings and disown them at the same time; it is no accident that Pynchon so loves the shaggy dog story, which does the same. (His new novel is built on the shaggy dog story.) Thus he has created readers who think that he is a great occultist and readers who think that he is a visited hoaxer. His novels are huge manic factories that seem alive but are deeply static. They do not move. Yes, they twirl meanings around, they displace meanings; but they do not finally produce meaning. The factory has no products.

Pynchon's readers often mistake bright lights for evidence of habitation. One saw this in the reception of *Mason & Dixon*. It drew gasps: here is a novel set in the eighteenth century, wrote the reviewers, in which we see the first English pizza being made, and a dog that talks, and two clocks in conversation, and a vast octagonal Gloucestershire cheese, and George Washington

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smoking a joint, and a mechanical duck; and a crazed Chinese man who lectures everybody in sight on the magic of *feng shui*, and a giant Golem, and a severed ear that moves. They listed these things as if they were scenes and not objects, as if they constitute the movement, the workings, of the novel. But on the whole these occurrences do not move, are not scenes. They are fixed in a lively grid. Yet it was taken as brilliant that the book merely contains these things, like a cabinet of wonders; they were listed as simple natural marvels, whose presence was in itself evidence of significance. There was no need to ask what these marvels were for. They were read as signs; they were taken allegorically. Signs were taken for wonders.

There are delights in Pynchon's book, and some wonders. Chief among them is his language, which is notionally a pastiche of mid-eighteenth-century prose, but is in fact a beautifully flexible alloy, capable of bending calendrically, to take in early eighteenth-century styles as well as late-twentieth-century incursions. The novel's story is told by one Reverend Cherrycoke, who accompanied the surveyors Mason and Dixon on their trip to divide Pennsylvania and Maryland in the mid-1760s. Verbally, the reverend is metaphorical, sententious, rounded, periodical, lawless. All this is to the prose's good. It is the novel's achievement to create a prose, when it is working well, that seems not so much antiquarian as pristine—an American language before it knew itself as "an American language." Indeed, the capitalized nouns that are flaked all over the book begin to seem like the capitals of linebreaks: the prose is sometimes like a poetry that was written out in prose by mistake.

> Below them the lamps were coming on in the Taverns ... the wind was shaking the Plantations of bare trees, the River ceasing to reflect, as it began to absorb, the last light of the Day. They were out in Greenwich Park, walking near Lord Chesterfield's House,—the Autumn was well advanc'd, the trees gone to Pen-Strokes and Shadows in crippl'd Plexity, bath'd in the declining light. A keen wind flow'd about them.

Yet this language, despite its beauty, is only a refined game. On its own, it is not enough to make a novel great. And the limitations of *Mason & Dixon* are the limitations of allegory. Truly, *Mason & Dixon* is not a novel. It functions as an allegorical picaresque, rolling the brougham of itself from implication to implication, taking on extra implications at one town and throwing off a few at the next. It tamps its characters down into little plots of meaning, then uproots them. Its characters exist to dispense lessons, ideological or philosophical. They do not exist as people. As usual in Pynchon, there are scenes that mean too much and there are scenes that mean too little.

Thus the Mason-Dixon line, which the eponymous heroes are drawing, is made to stand for several things: the good rule of law and the tyrannical rule of law, freedom and imperialism. George Washington smoking cannabis is no doubt supposed to instruct us in the importance of liberality at the highest levels. But the octagonal Gloucestershire cheese and the mobile ear are just diversions, scattered throughout the book—they act like the money that politicians used to throw to voters from the cart: they distract us from the truth.

How we respond to such comedy will depend on our tolerance for these sorts of japes and frolics. Pynchon is famous for his fantastic comedy. But too much, even in this benign book, seems willed, unfree, a hysteria that he forces onto his scenes because without it they would not really exist. It is the difference between the comedy of character and the comedy of culture. Pynchon does not, or cannot, do the former; what he can do, sometimes powerfully, is to make the culture vibrate at high speed, and to whip comedy from the rotations.

To be fair, in this book, and for the first time in his writing, his two protagonists have some concreteness. Both are English. Charles Mason is from Gloucestershire, a melancholic deist in long mourning for his dead wife Rebekah, and essentially conservative in temperament. Jeremiah Dixon is from the north of England, near Durham. He is a Quaker, an instinctive radical and populist, who finds himself appalled by the cruelties of American life (Indian-killing and slavery) even while enamored of its rebellious volume.

Mason and Dixon are a double act; most of their reality is complementary. They are most full as characters when they are acting as halves to each other. Mason is gloomy, Dixon is cheery; Mason is sophisticated, Dixon a bumpkin; Mason is an astronomer (he looks up), Dixon a surveyor (he looks down); and so on. The comedy that Pynchon extracts from this is familiar, and occasionally touching. The novel opens with the pair voyaging to South Africa, to the Cape of Good Hope, to chart the Transit of Venus. (Since everything is always

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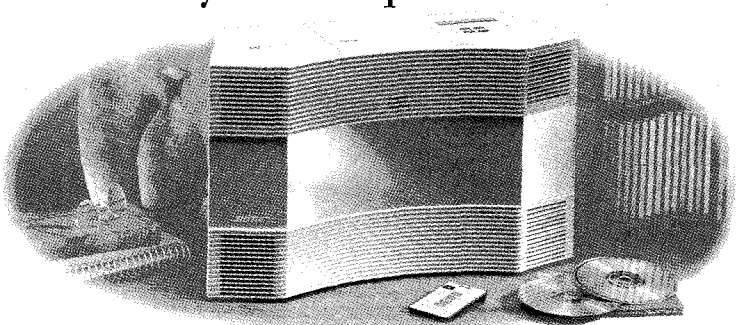

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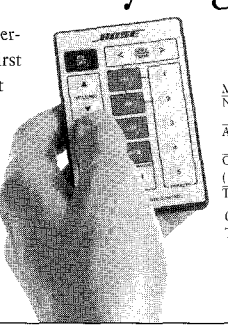

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connected in Pynchon, the two also conduct some transits of Venus on land, in the shape of the highly sexed Vroom sisters, who tease them, Fielding-style.) At this time, Mason and Dixon are hardly on speaking terms, and cannot look each other in the eye. But they are not long in Capetown. By the end of the book, having spent more than four years in America and badged with all kinds of adventure, they have developed a deep fondness for each other.

This pattern has the guiltless banality of celluloid. It seems likely that Pynchon is burlesquing the buddy movie—the novel ends with the two men, now retired from their surveying labors, fishing together on an English river, grumpy old men, but learning to talk about their wives and children. This is a reduced comedy, comedy in prison. It relies entirely on fixed forms and the fixed escape from those forms. For example, the picaresque. The two heroes are invited to come to America to survey the state boundaries, and there they move from adventure to adventure—and this has the ridged, repetitive quality of the picaresque: however dissimilar each new adventure is from its predecessor, it resembles it in its mere adventurousness. Pynchon throws at us a giant Golem, the threat of Indian scalping, the lost tribe of Israel (apparently living in the Delaware forest), a mechanical duck, the long story of a French chef who moved from his native country to Pennsylvania, a story about rapacious Jesuits in Montreal, the late appearance of Johnson and Boswell, and on and on. The variety becomes homogeneous. One would like these fattened incidents to shrink into life; the road to become a current. The bloating is familiar from other Pynchon books, a weakness about knowing when to stop accumulating.

The comedy is fixed in other ways, too. Pynchon's most usual trick is anachronism: to confront the apparently antiquarian eighteenth-century form with unexpected modernities such as pizza, or the Malayan *ketjap*, or ketchup, with which Dixon lathers his food, or a woman asking: "Hallo, d'you think he'll get much of a hard-on, then?" There are puns ("Suture Self, as the Medical Students like to say"), and some charming sillinesses (some twins "nam'd Pitt and Pliny, so that each might be term'd 'the Elder' or 'the Younger', as might day-to-day please one, or annoy his Brother"). The comedy is most funny when least knowing. But too much of it works simply at the level of reader-recognition, a ticket-punch whereby we acknowledge the prompt presence of a Pynchon joke: the writer of sea yarns called Pat O'Brian, or the moment when Dixon goes into a Philadelphia coffee-house and asks for "Half and Half please," the punch coming a second later, when he clarifies: "Mount Kenya Double-A, with Java Highland...." Or when a character called Mrs. Eggslap quotes Tammy Wynette: "Sometimes, 'tis hard, to be a Woman." (Again, this is rarely comedy about people; it is comedy between cultures, the old and the new, and between the writer and his text.)

One of the least funny and least likable scenes involves Mason's and Dixon's meeting with Colonel Washington at Mount Vernon. It is emblematic of Pynchon's comic vision elsewhere—its desperation, its desire to squeeze meanings, its inability to resist a kind of comedic harlotry. Washington is first seen "talking real estate." He offers the English visitors some dope, while dispensing realpolitik about why Americans will always kill Indians. Washington likes to say "Proclamation-Shmocklamation" and "It's makin' me just mee-shugginah," a habit traceable to his African servant, Gershom, who is Jewish. At first we see Gershom serving coffee, and Pynchon notes only that he has "an ambiguous expression." A moment later, though, Gershom breaks in fondly: "Don't bother about that Israelite talk, anyhow ... it's his way of joaking, he does it all the time." The scene ends with Gershom singing "Havah Nagilah, a merry Jewish Air, whilst clicking together a pair of Spoons in Syncopation."

This moment feels characteristic of many others in Pynchon's work: the expected is disrupted by the zany, and a purchaseless benignity falls over the whole scene. At such a moment, one realizes why so many of Pynchon's characters, here and elsewhere, have an irritating habit of breaking into song: the principle of Pynchon's comedy is the principle of the stage-musical. Everyone gets to sing their song, however senseless. Pynchon's farce floats in the watery democracy of the musical, the idea that everyone sings as well as the next person and deserves a moment under the lights, that many tunes are better than one tune. Gershom turns and reveals that he is not really a slave, but a mild Jew. Good for him!

Of course, the novel-form *is* a warmly democratic form, in the sense that the smallest people are noticed—Nabokov, writing about Dickens, claimed this for it. But there is a difference between descriptive charity and comic subsidy, which is the difference between real comic sympathy and the lend-lease of allegory. For Pynchon wants something back from Gershom, for Gershom's twirl on stage. He wants Gershom to signify politically.

It is a moment of utopian wish-fulfillment: oh, if the whole world were like this! Gershom must pay us back by fulfilling our wish. And thus it is, in part, that this scene is not funny, and has no stringency. Since it is not human comedy, it is not freely given—characters are not allowed to exist in "the irresponsible plastic way" in James's lovely phrase. Indeed, the comedy is not given at all: it is extracted from the characters, at their expense. Pynchon does not seem to care for a Washington or a Gershom who might move us or truly interest us. And this is the burrowed agenda of Pynchon's writing: scenes like this one can be strictly meaningless on the surface, because they are supposed to represent something underneath their surface. The comedy is not about the people involved. It is about a cultural moment, about an idea or an ideal—not a moment of free fiction but of unfree allegory.

This is the principle of Pynchon's fiction, and it drives this book, particularly its politics. The America in which Mason and Dixon travel resembles the America of *The Crying of Lot 49*; there is not such a great distance between 1766 and 1966. Both are ruled by what Pynchon once called "an emerging techno-political order that might or might not know what it was doing." America is both pure possibility and deep degradation, in Pynchon's vision. His diagnosis veers between the wildly dystopian and the wildly utopian.

The degraded America is the country about which Pynchon wrote in a short essay on "Sloth," in 1993, in *The New York Times Book Review*. In the eighteenth century, he observed, America was "consolidating itself as a Christian capitalist state." In *Mason & Dixon*, the Christian capitalist state has been seeding itself, it seems, by laying waste the land. Both Mason and Dixon are shocked by the subjection of the Indians, and by slavery. In South Africa, they saw a similar tyranny. "Whites in both places," thinks Mason, "are become the very Savages of their own worst Dreams...." Dixon recalls "the iron Criminality of the Cape" and "the beefy contented faces of those whites," but decides that "far worse happen'd here," in America. The Reverend Wicks, narrating the novel, plunges this truth home: "the word *Liberty* ... was taken in those Times to encompass even the darkest of Men's rights,—to injure whomever we might wish,—unto exter-

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mination, were it possible.... "

As Mason and Dixon make their way along what they call "the Visto," the wide trench they cut from the Chesapeake Bay to the Ohio River, they meet various Indians and slaves. They are tutored in corruption. Near the end of the book, Dixon decides that he is no better than these white Americans, "having drawn them a Line between their Slave-Keepers, and their Wage-Payers.... " For in cutting a line between a slave state and a free state, he has simply shared in the general illusion that slavery is "ever somewhere else"—in South Africa, or in Maryland—"but oh, never in Holland, nor in England, that Garden of Fools." "Where does it end?" he laments. "No matter where in it we go, shall we find all the World Tyrants and Slaves? America was the one place we should *not* have found them." This is the busted dream that Pynchon writes about in *The Crying of Lot 49*, a land "with the chances once so good for diversity."

What troubles is not the relative ordinariness of these ideas, but their lumpy deployment in fiction. Mason's and Dixon's blotter-like receptivity to every bloodstain of American capitalism seems a little convenient, artistically. His characters might be freer as characters if Pynchon allowed them to put up some resistance to Pynchon's view of things. But that would be fiction, not allegory. Of course, they do respond to the freedoms, the unscored music of early American life. Pynchon especially enjoys the democratic anarchy of American religious life. There are insane German sects and dour Puritans and strict Quakers and busy Catholics, all of them at stormy war with one another. Politically, there are British patriots and American rebels and mild indifferents. The Indians are fighting the Americans who are fighting the British; and beneath it all, the dried powder of slavery, ready to fire.

In the usual Pynchon way, this world is furrowed with paranoia. Each American suspects the next of being an agent or a spy. The Jesuit network is especially feared, and Mason's and Dixon's cutting party is joined by a mad Chinese, Captain Zhang, who is on the run from the Jesuits. Indeed, it emerges that most of the surveying group are agents of one power or another, including Mason and Dixon, as Dixon observes. To a skeptical Mason, he declares that both of them are paid employees, and therefore agents, of the British crown. They are servants of the oppressor of both black and white Americans.

So this is America in the 1760s. But really, it is the thickly sown lot of Pynchon's mind. For the wartime London of *Gravity's Rainbow* is a similar place, less a city of one noble British defense than the site of internecine paranoias, a city of shadowy groupings and official acronyms: "Everyone watching over his shoulder, Free French plotting revenge on Vichy traitors, Lublin Communists drawing beads on Varsovian shadow-ministers, ELAS Greeks stalking royalists, unrepatriable dreamers of all languages hoping through will, fists, prayer to bring back kings, republics, pretenders, summer anarchisms that perished before the first crops were in.... " (Pynchon's inability to stop accumulating meanings finds its verbal embodiment in his fondness for lists and catalogs.) And this is the California of *The Crying of Lot 49*, where Oedipa Maas voyages among secret groups and inflamed syndicates, trying to read the signs and the clues that Pynchon throws to her.

Paradoxically, it is in this sea of paranoia that the drowning may be saved. Pynchon seems to cherish the contradictory energy of diverse paranoias because of their lust for confusion. Their busyness confounds the single ruling order, that "techno-political order." In *Mason & Dixon*, a young radical praises the jumbled street music of America, especially "the Negroe Musick ... 'tis there sings your Revolution." In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa realizes that "the only alternative was some unthinkable order of music, many rhythms, all keys at once.... "

What is the vehicle of this plotlessness, this new music? It is the novel—more, the sliding chromaticism of Pynchon's novels. Against the plot of government stands the musical novel, with its many plots or tunes. In case we miss this, Pynchon uses his characters to remind us. In *Mason & Dixon*, a character informs us that

> Who claims Truth, Truth abandons. History is hir'd, or coerc'd, only in interests that most ever prove base.... She needs rather to be tended lovingly and honorably by fabulists and counterfeiters, Ballad-Mongers and Cranks of ev'ry Radius, Masters of Disguise to provide her the Costume, Toilette, and Bearing, and Speech nimble enough to keep her beyond the Desires, or even the Curiosity, of Government....

Then he stops, and the Reverend Cherrycoke warns us of "the danger of reading these storybooks,—in particular those known as 'Novel.' " It is the beautiful paranoids ("Cranks of ev'ry Radius") against the government; and fiction is a local branch of this beautiful paranoia. Pynchon is hippie-ish, a moist anarchist.

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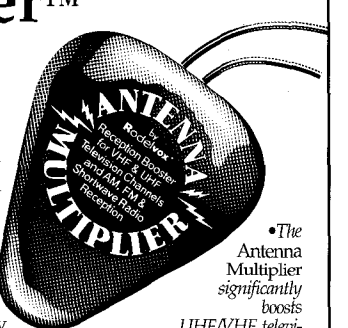

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"Scatology Series,"

Marek calls the erotic
sculptures he invites me to view
at the gallery where I run
into the man
who had once been my life,
who'd introduced me to Marek;
"Scatology Series," to which I bring
another man, who I met through
another man, who has twice been my lover,
and friend to both men I've already mentioned,
but not to Marek, whose wife is here
and helped with the opening of "Scatology Series,"
although they're living apart;
and I gaze at the objects
Marek has sculpted, sensuous urinals
in purest white porcelain, mounted
on steel, and I learn
that the man who had once been my life
will be married in autumn,
(although this didn't happen),
and I leave with the man
whom I brought to the gallery
who will soon have to leave
to dine with the son of the woman
who has left him for the third time.

ESTHA WEINER

Pynchon's fiction elaborates an allegorical politics. Partial truths are forced into a bent absolutism. It is a system whose vents and flaws seem only to make it stronger, more wrongly consistent, like medieval astronomy. Pynchon's world is a planetarium devised by a myope. The forces of evil, in Pynchon's vision, are the straight, the linear, the rule of governance. Mason and Dixon, though likable men, are agents of fixity. They are surveyors, and knowledge is power. Dixon recalls that, back in England, he laid out the boundaries that enforced the hated and unfair system of land-enclosures: "He had drawn Lines of Ink that became Fences of Stone."

Yet underneath the soil the anarchy of non-linear freedom lives. "Down Below, where no property Lines existed, lay a World as yet untravers'd." Captain Zhang, with his love of *feng shui*, reminds the surveyors that their line "acts as a Conduit for what we call *Sha*, or, as they say in Spanish California, Bad Energy...." The Mason-Dixon line is like a dragon's tooth across the free flesh of the land, he warns. The Reverend Cherrycoke explains that Pennsylvania and Maryland are white man's abstractions. They do not exist, but are merely "a chronicle of Frauds committed serially against the Indians dwelling there."

The forces of good—who may be as crazy as the forces of evil—are all those who drift out of the reach of governance and rule. Dream is the utopian space of resistance. *The Crying of Lot 49* ends by praising "drifters" who live as if "in exile" from America. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Tyrone Slothrop battles unseen enemy forces and is thrown back, as resistance, onto "dreams, psychic flashes, omens, cryptographies, drug-epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity...." In the paranoia of dreams, there you feel free. In *Mason & Dixon*, all the uncharted America west of the Mason-Dixon line is the land of dream, "serving as a very Rubbish-Tip for subjunctive Hopes, for all that may yet be true...." And these dreams are "safe till the next Territory to the West be seen and recorded, measur'd and tied in...." Dreams are safe until they are ruled.

It is a sign of how greatly Pynchon's indexical intelligence intimidates his readers, a measure of his powers of evasion and self-subsidence, that few question the triteness, or the truth, of these notions. (And their ungainliness as fictional ideas.) But one of the advantages of the utopian is that it is impossible to fulfill. Pynchon's utopian good is good exactly because it is the uncharted. It is futurity or dream. It dwarves one's known littleness. Similarly, Pynchon's evil works in his fiction as an inverted utopia, a nightmare that has no streets or fixtures, that cannot be named. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Slothrop, an American intelligence officer based in wartime London, is obsessed with the idea that "they" are out to get him. He wonders if "they" will explode a rocket over London with his name on it. But "they" are not the Nazis, who are actually sending rockets to London. No, "they" embrace "possibilities far beyond Nazi Germany." But we never find out who "they" are.

Only very occasionally does Pynchon become specific; only rarely does he come out of hiding. Perhaps it is just as well. For Pynchon's *Times* essay, in which he attempts to give body to the forces of evil and the forces of resistance, is dismayingly incoherent. In it, he suggests that, in mid-eighteenth-century capitalist America, time—clock-time—became a tyrannical linearity that ruled all citizens. Only the "ungovernable warp of dreams," or a secularized form of the old sin of sloth, could counter time. The modern equivalent of enforced linearity, he argues, is television. And how might we fight this televisual governance? With the VCR! "We may for now at least have found the illusion, the effect, of controlling, reversing, slowing, speeding and repeating time—even imagining that we can escape it." And then, in a characteristic move, almost as if Pynchon has seen that he has revealed too much, that he has been spotted, that without his novelistic clothes he looks only like a survival of *Evergreen* or a member of the editorial board of *Social Text*, he retreats. He seems to mock the very idea that he has proposed, to disown his own allegory. When he writes, for instance, that "sins against video time will have to be radically redefined," it is difficult not to hear Pynchon's snicker. He is having us on. Perhaps he is making fun of Andrew Ross; perhaps not. But he has certainly disappeared.

In this way, Pynchon covers his allegorical hide. At first sight, he seems to avoid a too-schematic war of good and evil by confiscating the identity papers of both sides. Maybe, Pynchon asks, good and evil are one side, not two. How

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would we ever know? The real forces of government are as invisible as the unreal forces of dream, and it is the fate of Pynchon's characters to search a landscape of toppled signs. This, Pynchon suggests, is the real terror of modern society, this cloud of unknowing. Pynchon *appears* to free his allegory into fiction. In *Mason & Dixon*, the English surveyors are good men serving a bad King. The line they draw is a gesture of imperial rule, yet it also rules between good and bad, between free men and slaveholders. Captain Zhang, who complains so bitterly that the Mason-Dixon line is a bad force, is himself a bad force, a monomaniac in a world that should be plural and drifting. All this would, on the face of it, seem to be properly contradictory, negatively capable, and so on. Pynchon believes in the importance of plurality. He resents lines and therefore struggles to diversify his own sometimes schematic fictions. He fends off any single allegorical direction or reading. He wants his people to have many choices, including his readers, and he thinks that this is pluralism. Oedipa Maas is waiting for the end of normative America, "waiting for a symmetry of choices to break down, to go skew. . . . "

The problem is that Pynchon's allegories are themselves tyrannical. This is his great failure. His belief in plurality is itself an inflexible bolus. His characters do not move us, because they are not free. They are serfs to allegory. They exist to generate meanings or to dissipate meanings. Even in *Mason & Dixon*, where character is given much greater play, one sees Pynchon forced to award his characters an extraneous flamboyance—as with zany Captain Zhang—because they cannot generate interiority. They must be theatrical, because all they are for is to enforce meanings. They are not human, they are agents; they not only think of themselves as agents of various forces, but they act as agents for their author. This is a vision that bullies not only its characters but also its readers into paranoid hunting. (Tony Tanner, the critic whose generous reading of Pynchon is now influential, argues that it is one of Pynchon's achievements to force his readers to read him paranoically.)

Pynchon may long for the polyphonic music of the fabulist, but his novels enforce a strict binarism even as they congratulate themselves on deconstructing this binarism. Oedipa may want "a symmetry of choices to break down," but Pynchon's very fiction is built on a symmetry of choices. Either utopia or dystopia; either governance or dream; either too much meaning or not enough

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What are the facts?

A Bizarre Concept. The concept to bring "sacrifices for peace" is a new one that has never before found application in world history. It was created by Arab propaganda to induce Israel to agree to its dismemberment, to give strategic assets to those who are determined to destroy it.

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been subjected to almost constant Arab terror, to unceasing Arab aggression, and to three major wars. In the Six-Day War, it recovered its heartland of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; it captured the Golan Heights from Syria, which had been used for decades to shell and spread terror over much of northern Israel; and it conquered Gaza and the Sinai Desert that had been used by Egypt as staging ground and invasion route to Israel.

Many Sacrifices for Peace. In order to achieve peace with its neighbors, Israel brought sacrifices for peace that have no precedent in the history of the world. For peace with Egypt, Israel returned the entire Sinai. There is little thanks on the part of Egypt for this generosity and this sacrifice for peace. The controlled Egyptian press spews daily anti-Israel venom. President Mubarak has never visited Jerusalem. It is the coolest possible peace. A sacrifice for peace brought in vain—probably a major act of folly on the part of Israel.

Israel made sacrifices for peace by signing a peace treaty with Jordan. In that peace, Israel granted Jordan a large yearly allowance of fresh water from its own dwindling and meager resources and accepted a petty demand for "border rectification"—yielding of land. As for Syria, no offered sacrifice for peace seems to be sufficient to satisfy its dictator, President Hafez Assad. He is unwilling to consider even an ice-cold peace, except for Israel's total surrender of the Golan Heights. Fortunately, under the current Israeli government such a surrender is not in the cards.

The greatest sacrifice for peace that Israel has brought was the resuscitation of the bankrupt and moribund PLO terror organization and the acceptance of it "chairman" Yasser Arafat as a negotiating partner. In this ill-advised process, foisted on Israel by world pressure and by its previous government, Israel has made far-reaching and existential sacrifices and concessions. It has yielded control of the Gaza Strip and of all major "West Bank" cities to the Palestinian Authority and has agreed to detailed plans to grant further autonomy to the Palestinians. In what is probably the ultimate folly in this process, Israel has tolerated the formation of a Palestinian "police force" (actually an army) of 40,000 men—the largest police-to-population ratio in the world (!)—and has equipped this "police force' with a complete arsenal of automatic weapons. As the world now knows, these weapons were turned on Israeli soldiers and civilians at the very first opportunity that the Palestinian leaders provoked.

Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police."

The Arab countries, not Israel, are killing peace in the Middle East. The PLO, apart from the bloody crimes that it has committed against Israel, has now established a virtual dictatorship in the territory allotted to it. In Egypt, thousands of Copts have been killed and their churches burned. President Assad of Syria has occupied Lebanon and has killed and tortured thousands. Iraq, under its dictator Saddam Hussein, is a rogue state attacking its neighbors and killing its own citizens. Saudi Arabia is a monarchical tyranny. Sudan is engaged in the systematic slaughter and enslavement of its black African people. How strange that nobody asks the Palestinians or any of the Arab states to bring any sacrifices for peace. Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police." Billy clubs are good enough for London Bobbies. Why should any more be needed to patrol Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem?

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meaning. At the end of *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pynchon offers Oedipa a choice: if the shadowy organization ("The Tristero") that she has been tracking exists, she will join it and escape, because she cannot wait any longer for America to mend its ways. And if the organization does not exist, then she must live in America. And if she must live in America, then she will have to be paranoid.

At first, Pynchon seems to be suggesting that this ordeal of choice is what is wrong with America: it is America that forces us to choose between exile or madness. But since we cannot verify that such a choice need exist (the novel leaves open the possibility that The Tristero is merely Oedipa's hallucination), since Pynchon's vision is itself so ungrounded, all we can say is that this ordeal is Pynchon's problem, not America's. It is Pynchon, not America, that offers secrecy or dissolution as the only choice.

Pynchon's novels have a certain power—the agitated density of a prison, a closed system. But can one construct and disown allegory without producing incoherence, and an incoherence that seems evasive rather than suggestive? In *Moby-Dick*, Melville came close to destroying his book, by loading its circuitries of significance with so much energy that the novel was in danger of meaning too much and therefore too little. In *Moby-Dick*, the whale is good and evil, it is truth and it is blankness. It is a thousand things. But what is at stake in the novel is supremely human; it is the fate of one's soul. Melville used allegory to hunt down truth, and in so doing he exploded allegory into a thousand pieces. Pynchon uses allegory to hide truth, and in so doing he expands allegory into a fetish of itself. Melville raced with the danger of nothingness while running after truth. Nothingness was a wound in truth's side. But what is left when allegory does not believe in the possibility of truth is merely *the allegorical*; or a dogmatic faith in it. What is left are novels that draw attention only to their own significations, which hang without reference, inflamedly pointing like a severed arm to nowhere in particular. •

Reason The Need

By Colin McGinn

The Last Word by Thomas Nagel

(Oxford University Press, 148 pp., $19.95)

Human beings are endowed with the capacity to form beliefs and to make decisions, and we sometimes achieve these feats by a process known as reasoning. In the quest for justified judgment, we consider the reasons that warrant a certain conclusion. The name of this faculty, appropriately enough, is "reason," and it divides into the theoretical (belief-formation) and the practical (decision-making). Reason is what enables us to weigh reasons in the course of reasoning. But what kinds of things are reasons and what manner of process is reasoning? What is the nature of human reason?

The traditional conception of reason, aptly called rationalist, holds that reason is a mental capacity that is responsive to an independent realm of timeless, objective truths and principles of argument. These are both deductive and inductive. By the use of reason, we acknowledge these truths and conform our thinking about them to the rules of valid argument. When reason is operating optimally, it tracks the layout of this independent realm of fact and logical consequence, and its products are to be evaluated according to the objective standards that it purports to mirror. Thus, to take an ancient example, suppose I form the belief that Socrates is mortal on the grounds that Socrates is a man and all men are mortal: I will have reasoned to a true conclusion based on two true premises and a valid logical principle, namely, that if everything of a certain kind has a property then any particular thing of that kind must have the property.

Since the premises are true and the logical principle valid, my reason has led me to form a true and justified belief. My mental transitions have respected the facts and correct relations of logical consequence, which obtain quite independently of whether I succeed in recognizing them. Since these are intrinsically independent of my mind, anyone else has the same reason to form the belief that Socrates is mortal. The realm of fact and logic mandates a certain conclusion, so that anyone who fails to reason the way I do is guilty of error. The laws of logic are universal, timeless, prescriptive. And mind-independent: they determine the standards that *any* mind must respect, if it is to reason correctly.

When you and I agree in our reasoning, we do so because we both acknowledge the same mind-independent reasons for forming our beliefs as we do, at least if we are reasoning correctly. And this is just as true if I happen to be a Martian and you a bushman of the Kalahari or a Wall Street stockbroker or an intelligent mollusk. To be rational is to be in tune with the impersonal order of fact and logical consequence, *tout court*. And what is true for the case of reasoning of a deductive kind is also true for scientific reasoning, indeed for practical and ethical reasoning: in all these areas, there are objective standards of correctness to which reasoning minds are beholden.

Or so says the traditional picture of human reason. But there is another conception of the nature of reason that is radically opposed to the traditional one. Call this the subjectivist conception. According to this conception, human reason is inherently local, culture-relative, rooted in the variable facts of human nature and history, a matter of divergent "practices" and "forms of life" and "frames of reference" and "conceptual schemes." There are no norms of reasoning that transcend what is accepted by a society or an epoch, no objective justifications for belief that everyone must respect on pain of cognitive malfunction. To be valid is to be taken to be valid, and different people can have legitimately different patterns of taking. In the end, the only justifications for belief have the form "justified for me."

In such a view, objectivity, if it exists at all, is a function of social relations: a matter of social consensus, not of acknowledging truths and principles that obtain whether or not any society recognizes them. When we agree, it is not because we all accept the same objectively valid justifications; rather, we call something justified when we all happen to agree on it. The norms of reasoning are ultimately like the norms of fashion. Thus there can be no genuine rational persuasion between members of different cultural communities—not if that means appealing to facts and principles that demand to be accepted by any rational being. Others can always reject your cherished axioms in favor of their own and be guilty of no error. Differences of belief are like differences of skin color or musical taste—natural differences,

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between which no adjudication is possible. The traditional rationalist view of reason, from the subjectivist's perspective, is mere superstition, suspiciously imperialist, and made obsolete by enhanced cultural awareness and a more naturalistic picture of the human mind.

Thomas Nagel's book is a ringing defense of the rationalist conception of reason and an uncompromising attack on the subjectivist conception. Perhaps this will surprise those who vaguely associate Nagel with an insistence on the irreducible reality of subjectivity. Isn't he the soft-edged philosopher who urged the radical mental difference between bats and humans, in a famous paper called "What is it Like to be a Bat?" Isn't he the cuddly champion of phenomenological diversity, of irreducibly distinct perceptual worlds? It is true that Nagel did emphasize the varieties of consciousness, but even this insistence has always been in the service of achieving greater objectivity in our human view of the world, of recognizing that there are objective facts about bats that we cannot grasp. There has never been so much as a hint of relativism in Nagel's assertions of experiential diversity.

The rationalist element in his thinking has been there from the very start, from *The Possibility of Altruism*, a defense of moral reason, to *The View From Nowhere*, an exploration of the tensions between the demands of objective reason and our subjective peculiarities. In his new book, Nagel tackles the claims of impartial reason head on, arguing for its universal prescriptive status, and spelling out the ways and the regions in which this status is strictly non-negotiable. As he writes:

> Once we enter the world for our temporary stay in it, there is no alternative but to try to decide what to believe and how to live, and the only way to do that is by trying to decide what is the case and what is right. Even if we distance ourselves from some of our thoughts and impulses, and regard them from outside, the process of trying to place ourselves in the world leads inevitably to thoughts that we cannot think of as merely "ours." If we think at all, we must think of ourselves, individually and collectively, as submitting to the order of reasons rather than creating it.

As he notes, Nagel's sympathies are with Plato, Descartes and Frege—all exponents of a strongly objectivist conception of reason. The demands of reason are impersonal and universally binding, not the upshot of natural facts about human beings and their practices, individual or social. When we trace down the structure of our reasoning, the last word is not "this is what is justified for me/us"; it is an affirmation of objective truth which any reasoner is obliged to recognize. The last word does not belong to human nature.

Nagel's basic argument is that the operations of objective reason cannot be suspended. He demonstrates this pretty conclusively. The subjectivist holds that reason is nothing other than a manifestation of local and relative contingencies, and that its results have no authority beyond that parochial domain; in trying to go beyond the local, reason overreaches itself and produces empty assertions. This is clearly a theory about the nature of reason, opposed to that of the rationalist: it purports to tell us what reason is, what its place in the world amounts to. But the point is that this theory is offered as the *truth* about reason, as something that ought to command the assent of all rational beings. It is not offered as merely true for its propounder or his speech community. No, it is meant as a (non-relatively) true account of the very nature of reason. In propounding it, therefore, the subjectivist himself employs principles of reasoning and commitments to truth which are taken to have more than relative validity.

But this is to presuppose the very thing that the subjectivist is claiming to call into question. There is a dilemma here for the subjectivist or the skeptic about reason: either announce the debunking account of reason as the objective truth that any rational person must accept, or put it forward as merely an instance of its own official conception of truth. In the former case, the subjectivist contradicts himself, claiming a status for his utterance that according to him no utterance can have; but in the latter case, the claim is merely true for him and has no authority over anyone else's beliefs. In either case, it is not a claim we can take seriously. And so subjectivism is refuted.

As Nagel puts it, the subjectivist cannot say that "everything is subjective" except by inviting the retort: "Including that?" If the subjectivist's statement is true, then we can ignore it; if it is not, then it is false. In this sense, reason cannot be suspended even when we try to deny its possibility. We cannot treat all of our thoughts merely as expressions of our nature which carry no commitments about how the world objectively is, since this very thought cannot be regarded in that way. Reason is not an option for thought, it is a condition of all thought, however skeptical in intent.

This makes skepticism about reason different from other forms of skepticism. I can question the justifiability of my beliefs about the external world or other minds without having to presuppose those very beliefs. I can use reason to cast doubt on a subset of my beliefs about the world. In this regard, the skeptic is avowedly an advocate of reason, proudly employing it in his skeptical arguments, claiming that our habitual beliefs are lazily contrary to reason. But the would-be skeptic about reason itself is in a totally different position. For he must employ it even as he questions its employment. Skepticism about reason is strictly self-refuting, and so it marks the logical limit of doubt.

We cannot suspend our commitment to reasoning without ceasing to reason, but then we cannot hope to persuade anyone, including ourselves, that we have a credible point of view. We may twist and turn in an effort to circumvent reason, but it always turns up in our very circumventions, at least if they are intended as candidates for belief. We must, as Nagel says, think some of our thoughts "straight," not detach ourselves from them or bracket them or relativize them or enclose them in mental inverted commas. Ultimately, there is no alternative to simple cognitive commitment. Descartes was essentially correct: we may try to pare away our beliefs to reach a state of intellectual suspension, but in the end there are propositions

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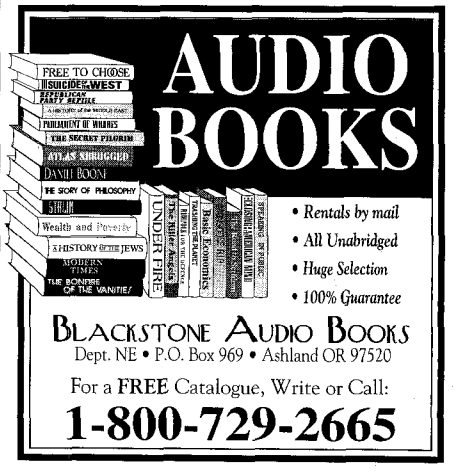

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from which we cannot escape, and they force themselves on us as unavoidably true. There is a kind of gravity of the mind that pins our thoughts down to a range of fixed points. We are not free agents in the realm of thought.

Of course, none of this means that the products of reason are always certain or unrevisable or free from prejudice and error. But such critical judgments are themselves exercises of reason. We rationally judge that a once-sacred belief has been contradicted by the facts, that certainty is far harder to achieve than we commonly suppose, that many of our beliefs are the result of social conditioning and wishful thinking: but each of these judgments results from critical reflection in the light of new facts and inferential links—from an exercise of reason. What we cannot judge is that *all* judgments have irrational causes, since that would self-cancelingly apply to itself. It may indeed be true that many of the putative products of reason have been less than splendidly rational in their origin, but it does not follow that reason is always or necessarily so tainted—and it cannot be if *that* judgment is itself true. In the end, as Nagel likes to put it, reason always dominates.

One of the deliverances of reason is, clearly, that this argument is absolutely decisive. The skeptical position is inherently unstable, self-contradictory. But Nagel is too good a philosopher to rest content with this result. We know there is such a thing as impersonal objective reason, responsive to mind-independent truth, but that is not to say that we know how such a faculty is possible. And, once examined, reason can seem to constitute a very remarkable phenomenon. Take, for instance, our knowledge of arithmetic, something that is familiar to almost all of us. Integral to it is a grasp of the concept of infinity, since every number has a successor larger than it by one. But how is it possible for a finite, biologically evolved system such as the human mind to grasp such infinite domains? Or again, we recognize that every possible world is such that in it nothing can both be and not be (this is the law of non-contradiction), but how do we come by such a startlingly extensive thought?

Reason thus presents problems of intelligibility. It seems to possess powers that exceed what we have a right to expect of ourselves. And this fuels the urge to try to cut reason down to size, to make it an intelligible element of the natural order. Here, then, is a sophisticated motivation for a naturalistic reduction of reason. What Nagel refers to, perceptively, as a "fear of religion" leads us to try to shrink reason down into something scientifically manageable. For those who want atheism to be true (and Nagel includes himself in this category), there is the threat that reason calls for some sort of divine origin. In characteristic Nagelian style, then, we are led to accept the reality of something whose nature is inherently puzzling.

Nagel applies his general anti-subjectivist argument in a number of areas, including language, logic, arithmetic and ethics. In each of these areas he argues convincingly that the content of the judgments involved cannot be construed in subjectivist fashion, but must be taken as affording objective reasons with universal prescriptive force. Even in the case of ethics, reason must consider whether a given desire should lead to action, and this consideration is something that anyone with such a desire must acknowledge as setting objective standards of assessment. (The desire to kill, for example, is subject to the evaluation of moral reason.) Moral truth imposes its own prescriptions on our practical reasoning; it is not merely a projection of our habits of feeling and action.

The case that Nagel presents in these chapters should disturb all those who have been lulled, or bludgeoned, into the flabby relativism that is so rampant in contemporary intellectual culture. Richard Rorty comes in for some stern and incredulous words from Nagel, and they are richly deserved. But even such respectable figures as Nelson Goodman and Hilary Putnam have not been innocent of relativistic flirtations. As Nagel writes, evidently with some feeling:

> Claims that something is without relativistic qualification true or false, right or wrong, good or bad, risk being derided as expressions of a parochial perspective or form of life—not as a preliminary to showing that they are mistaken whereas something else is right, but as a way of showing that nothing is right and that instead we are all expressing our personal or cultural points of view. The actual result has been a growth in the already extreme intellectual laziness of contemporary culture and the collapse of serious argument throughout the lower reaches of the humanities and social sciences, together with a refusal to take seriously, as anything other than first-person avowals, the objective arguments of others.

The vast majority of those who toil in the fields of analytical philosophy will be in considerable sympathy with Nagel's central thesis. Indeed, many will find it obvious to the point of banality. And yet it needs reiterating. Nagel's argument is not only correct, it is also urgent. But this does not mean that every detail of his discussion is beyond question. I have a few cavils, with the firm warning to subjectivists that none of these criticisms is intended to undermine the general rationalist thesis. My own inclination is to want to make that thesis even stronger than Nagel.

A recurrent theme in Nagel's book is that there is an "inside" and an "outside" view of human reason, where the inside view is accorded primacy. (An entire chapter is titled "Why We Can't Understand Thought from the Outside.") We are told repeatedly that no outside view of reason can preserve its authority: "the authority of the most fundamental kinds of thought reveals itself only from inside each of them and cannot be underwritten by a theory of the thinker." It is not easy to interpret this spatial metaphor, but I think it suggests a mistaken picture of the status of reason. In the first place, it risks playing into the hands of subjectivists, in suggesting that reason is binding only from the point of view of the person exercising reason, not from an objective or "outside" point of view. It is only too easy to interpret this as saying that it seems to the reasoner that his thoughts have impersonal authority, but that once we look at him externally nothing about his reasoning has any claim on us. No doubt Nagel does not intend this reading, but his words lend themselves to it.

His use of the "inside/outside" contrast is not altogether consistent—and it is never explicitly defined—but sometimes at least it means simply that there are thoughts to which we cannot suspend commitment, as with Cartesian propositions such as "I think, therefore I am." There are indeed propositions from which we cannot detach ourselves because they compel our assent—propositions we cannot "get outside of" in that sense. But Nagel writes as if we can only hang on to rationalism if we refuse to place reason *in* the world, instead submitting ourselves to its dictates only from the "inside." Surely we can respect the rational relations borne by thoughts while also recognizing that thought is a natural phenomenon with a causal history and a set of empirical enabling conditions. I think this whole opposition between "inside" and "outside" conceptions of reason is confusing and should be abandoned. What is true is that we cannot see thought as rational if we refuse to acknowledge the logical and evidential relations borne by the propositional contents of thoughts—if we try to describe reasoning as merely a series of events. But this truth is not

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well expressed in terms of a contrast between "inside" and "outside."

Nagel opposes the "local" or the "parochial" to the "universal," suggesting that reason is essentially that which permits the move to complete generality. But this leaves the idea open to misinterpretation. The point is not that the principles of reason are in fact common to all human beings, and indeed all thinking beings. The point is that these principles are essentially normative or prescriptive. They tell us how we *ought* to reason. The move to reasons is not a move from the specific to the general; it is a move from facts to norms, from "is" to "ought."

Given that his book is a defense of reason as traditionally conceived, Nagel says very little about any specific truths or principles that reason cannot jettison. This is a consequence of the main strategy of the book. That strategy consists in showing that we must use *some* principles of reasoning even in arguments that purport to undermine reason in general. But this does not entail that there are any particular forms of reasoning that are indispensable. We must commit ourselves to some logical principles in reasoning or else we merely jabber, but whether these are the principles of traditional logic is another matter.

And this shows that the self-refutation strategy by itself has its limits. The subjectivist cannot avoid *some* kind of objective commitment in his reasoning, but who is to say *what* kind? And if we cannot select a unique set of principles as universally binding, there is room for another kind of skepticism—the kind that says that none of the received principles has any claim to be definitively correct. This is why it is not strong enough to say, as Nagel does, that "not everything can be revised, because something must be used to determine whether a revision is warranted—even if the proposition at issue is a very fundamental one." He means this to be compatible with the idea that every proposition is in principle revisable, but I think this is far too weak a condition to place on the structure of reason. We need to defend specific principles, too, if we are to rebut skepticism about reason.

There is also an inherent problem with defending reason by means of arguments that purport to show that certain forms of thought are "unavoidable," that we cannot suspend our commitment to them. The problem is simply that this can never by itself show that the thoughts in question are true. It never follows from the fact that a thought is unavoidable that it is a true thought. Here I disagree with Nagel's interpretation of Descartes's cogito. He thinks it shows that there are thoughts we cannot "get outside of," that we cannot stop thinking. I think that Descartes also showed that it is inconceivable that such a thought be false. The point about self-evident propositions is not that whenever we think we find ourselves stuck with them, since that is just a psychological fact about us; the point is that these propositions are known infallibly to be correct by the light of reason and cannot be conceived otherwise. The bare claim that some thoughts are inescapable cannot establish their unquestionable legitimacy; their inescapability has to be shown to be a matter of their truth.

But none of these objections detracts from the power of *The Last Word*. It is a book that should be read and pondered in this golden age of subjectivism. As to why such leanings exist and are so prevalent today, Nagel says little beyond noting the perennial appeal of all incoherent ideas. But I have a notion. It is that the rationalist conception of reason clashes with a popular and misguided ideal of freedom. Logic, after all, constrains our thinking. We must obey its mandates. Yet people don't want to be constrained; they want to feel that they can choose their beliefs, like beans in a supermarket. They want to be able to follow their impulses and not be reined in by impersonal demands. To suggest that there is only a single correct way to reason feels like a violation of the inalienable right to do whatever one wants to do.

The hard fact is that reason *is* a restriction on freedom. We really are required to believe only what is true and to reason validly. Nothing else is acceptable. And the ideal of unlimited freedom is indeed incompatible with that—in a way that it is not incompatible with the subjectivist's view of reason. I heard recently of a professor in an English department who had it pointed out to him that one of his examination questions for students contained a logical contradiction. His reply, after a fierce stare, was: "Are you trying to box me in with logic?" It is a shocking story, and it illustrates the decline of intellectual responsibility in centers of learning. In his feeling that logic is like a mental cage, the professor was genuinely a man of his day. And he was right. Reason is a cage. But who wants freedom at the expense of truth?

COLIN MCGINN is professor of philosophy at Rutgers University. His new book, *Ethics, Evil, and Fiction*, was published by Oxford University Press in July.

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 5*

I am not prepared to assert—and in fact do not believe—that the support of the Republican Party is absolutely essential to success in other states. It is crucial in the case of *both* major parties to distinguish between rank-and-file views on this issue and the views of the party elites. As I pointed out to Miller, polling data shows conclusively that Republicans, even more than Democrats, are solidly opposed to racial and gender preferences. I believe that what party elites may or may not do in the near term will be far less important to the eventual resolution of this public controversy than the strong and unwavering opposition to preferences by American voters of both parties.

THOMAS E. WOOD
Californians Against Discrimination and Preferences
Berkeley, California

John J. Miller replies:

I'm sorry that Thomas E. Wood disputes the way in which I quoted him, but, according to my notes from our interview, which I have double-checked, he did in fact say that statewide initiatives like California's Proposition 209 will not succeed "unless the Republican Party at the state and national levels gets in line with the grass-roots and decides to lead them." Which is what I reported.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

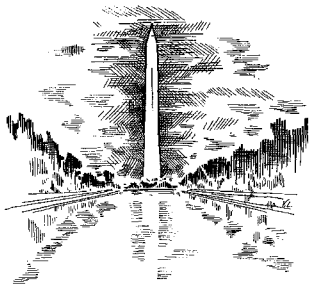
Low blows

IF YOU WATCHED NOTHING BUT talk shows, you would think that the most common job in America is being an "expert." Every hour, a different expert hosts some form of guerrilla counseling on TV. It's because of all this competition that daytime-television experts now resemble academics in specialization. On the talk shows, there aren't just adultery experts, there are commentators for every form of illicit intercourse. This year alone I've seen two men and a woman who specialize in my-wife-slept-with-my-daughter's-boyfriend-who-is-a-high-school-quarterback cases. I've always assumed these pundits chose their fields for some autobiographical reason. So, a few days after Mike Tyson was disqualified for biting Evander Holyfield, I offered a half-dozen talk shows my services as a "biting expert." I'm someone who knows a lot, I said on their voice mail, about "chomping on flesh under extreme stress."

ANXIOUS FOR A CANNIBAL, THREE panting producers called me back within two hours. I shared with them the story of how, in an unfortunate incident at summer camp when I was 11, the other cabin nerd tried to push my head into a toilet. With my forehead just inches from the water, I did the only thing I could think of: I lifted my head up and bit him on the cheek. Unlike Tyson, I didn't draw blood, but that didn't matter. Within hours, my candy privileges were suspended.

I ALSO HAD A MORE SERIOUS SELLing point. I am a fan of the only active fighter considered to be in the same class of dirtiness as Tyson: Andrew Golota. Until recently, Golota was a fugitive from Poland who, by coming to the U.S., had escaped assault charges. But one venue's assault is another's sweet science. In Chicago, Golota strapped on gloves and became a pro boxer, going undefeated for twenty-eight bouts. He became a Polish hero. Then, last July, Golota faced Riddick Bowe. Golota hammered the former heavyweight champion in the head until Bowe's eyes were swollen and blood splattered on the mat. The Pole was winning when, in the seventh round, he hit Bowe in the groin for the fourth time, leaving Bowe crouched in agony; Golota was disqualified.

IN DECEMBER, I ATTENDED THE REmatch, planning to root for Bowe. The Golota fans were not hard to miss. They painted their bodies red and white and carried signs that read: "POLE-AX 'EM ANDREW!" For me, they were particularly easy to spot, since I was seated in the middle of a large claque of them. At the outset, I cheered for Bowe. When he landed his first solid punch, sending Golota stumbling backward, I screamed, "Go Bowe!" But then the burly man on my right turned to me and began yelling: "I Pole-ax you. I Pole-ax you." I felt a sudden and genuine affinity for Golota. Within seconds, I was cheering, "Go Golota!" My ancestors, I informed my new fellow travelers, had emigrated to America from Poland. (I didn't divulge the circumstances of their hasty departure.) Within a round, we were as pretty a picture of international amity as you could ask for. Arm in arm, we cheered Golota, drank beer and hummed the Polish national anthem. I expressed a spurious love for Polish sausage and a more sincere, if not passionate, admiration for Casmir Pulaski, the Polish hero of the Revolutionary War. I announced that I always respected the Warsaw Convention, an international law that promises my family $75,000 if my flight crashes.



IN THE RING, GOLOTA SEEMED once again in control. He hit Bowe with a combination of uppercuts and jabs, until the champ was pushed against the ropes, his gloves shielding his face. But in the ninth round, as if in the grip of an irresistible impulse, Golota again began hitting Bowe below the belt. The referee warned the Pole, who nodded, as if he understood, then promptly punched Bowe in the groin. Moments later, Golota was disqualified.

GOLOTA WOULD BE A FASCINATing case study for psychologists. Most people cheat to help them win. Golota cheats in order to lose. "We try so hard to tell him not to hit anyone there," one of Golota's trainers told me. "We tell him every day, but he keeps doing it." One possibility is that he has taken a few too many blows to the head. This isn't the kind of explanation, however, that would appeal to Polish pride. So partisans have come up with another one: the conspiracy.

ANDREW ZUBITSKY, A SHORT AND well-wrinkled man who has been a boxing fan for more than fifty years, runs the Mid-Atlantic chapter of the unofficial Golota fan club. At his home office near Capitol Hill, Zubitsky has a chart called "The Golota Grid"—a complex web of government agencies, celebrities and rich people, which allegedly shows why he is continually disqualified. Zubitsky and his cohorts say if Golota were to win, it would be a windfall for the Polish economy, which they believe Jews fear. (I once again didn't mention why my people left Poland.) Zubitsky shows me a video he's made of all the low blows in slow motion. Zubitsky's tape is the boxing equivalent of the Zapruder film. Day and night, he watches it and breaks it out frame by frame. "They look directed," he says. "Can't you see? Can't you see?" I can't. Zubitsky claims he has FBI documents that show that Israeli agents installed special magnets in Bowe's shorts to draw Golota's fists. After the Tyson-Holyfield match, I called Zubitsky to see where this fit into the conspiracy. He said it was all a set-up. Tyson was disqualified because Holyfield—who is likely to fight Golota next year—is willing to let Israel install magnets on his kidneys.

ULTIMATELY, NONE OF THE TV talk shows was interested in my commentary, but a small Christian radio station in Kentucky said they would love to have me on their show. The booker asked me to avoid talking about my experience with biting, since it "reeks of something homosexuals would do." During my forty-five minutes on the air, I explained the Golota Grid in what I thought was a tongue-in-cheek style. But at least some of my listeners took it straight and called in with thoughtful questions on how abortion, gay rights and Catholics fit into the conspiracy. Others disapproved or had their own concerns. Ruth, "a longtime listener and first-time caller," said she thought I was the devil. When I protested, she said my denials were exactly what she would expect the devil to say. Another caller, named Bill, quoted biblical passages he claimed foreshadowed Golota as a great world leader. And George, an elderly caller, rambled for minutes about the duty of law enforcement until he accidentally hung up on himself. Three or four callers didn't even want to talk about boxing; they wanted the host to replace me with gospel music. "Thank you, Steve, for your time," the host finally said, and then signed me off with the words I wanted to hear: "Stephen Glass, who joined us from Washington, is an expert in conspiracy theories and how they relate to the boxing brutality of 1997."

STEPHEN GLASS

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MR. [illegible] DON'T [illegible] TO PAY MORE [illegible] ENERGY.

OPEN LETTER TO THE CONGRESS,
PRESIDENT CLINTON, AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE

We respectfully and urgently request you to reject efforts to stiffen the United Nations treaty signed in Rio on greenhouse gas emissions.

This stiffening would bind the U.S. to emission targets that restrict fossil fuels (coal, natural gas, petroleum), which are used to meet 80% of America's energy use, while exempting 2.5 billion people in foreign countries from also being forced to meet these emission targets. These emission targets will greatly force up the price of coal, natural gas and gasoline, as well as the cost of electricity.

The result will be anti-family; as families are forced to pay much more for the basic necessity of electricity, anti-farm; as the cost of farming and farm supplies soars, and anti-jobs; as tens of thousands of American jobs are lost, many going to the exempted foreign countries. All this will devastate the American family.

This will be especially harsh and unfair to Iowa seniors, Iowa poor, and other citizens who will be unfairly penalized.

We are all for protecting the environment from real, verified problems. But many scientists cannot agree that global warming is a real and significant problem. Why must Americans bear this burden for what are essentially computer guesses at potential future problems—while exempting over half of the world's population?

Please don't force Iowa's families, seniors, poor, farms, and businesses to be under this United Nations treaty.

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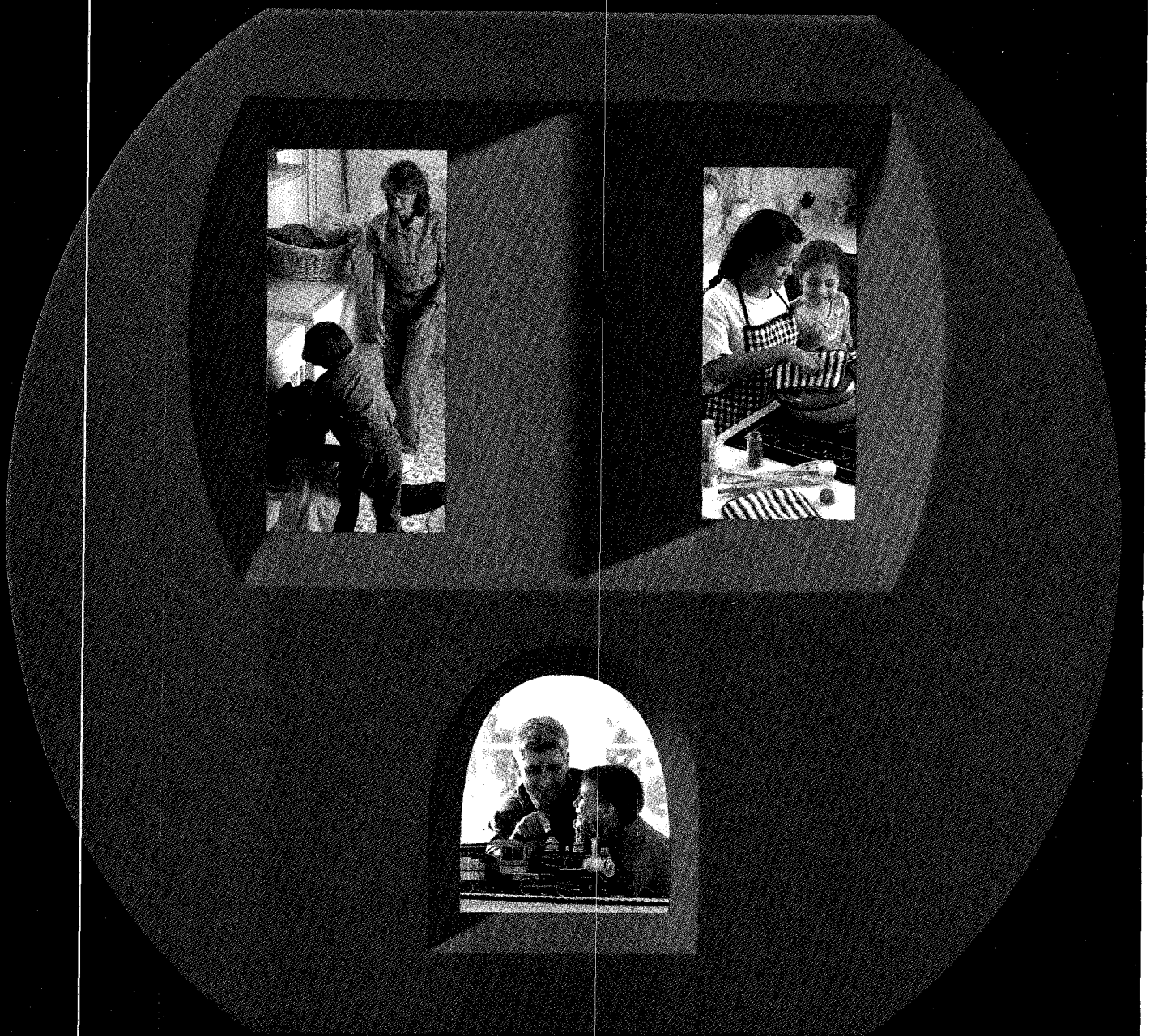

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